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THE ALPS FROM END TO END

## THE ALPS FROM END TO END.

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BIONNASSAY ARÊTE OF MONT BLANC

# THE ALPS FROM END TO END

By SIR WILLIAM MARTIN CONWAY

WITH 16 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

BY A. D. M'CORMICK

AND A CHAPTER BY THE

REV. W. A. B. COOLIDGE



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

CHANGES have been taking place so rapidly throughout the lifetime of this generation that it is impossible for one who during, say, five-and-twenty years, has been interested in some line of study or activity, to look back to the beginning of his career without emotions similar to those felt on turning to the history of a remote epoch. When I began climbing mountains, almost a quarter of a century ago, mountaineering, at all events in the Alps, was a very different matter from what it is to-day. The age of Alpine conquest was even then approaching its close, but present conditions did not prevail, and the sentiment of climbers was still that of pioneers.

The old-fashioned climber, the mountain hero of my boyhood, was a traveller and desired to be an explorer. When he went to the Alps he went to wander about and to rough it. He probably thought he could reduce the number of peaks still unclimbed and by most people conceived to be unclimbable, and it was his chief ambition to do so. The desire to discover new routes, which still lingers among Alpine travellers, is a belated survival from the days when most Alpine peaks were unclimbed. It is now being supplanted by emulation in the accomplishment of ascents of extreme difficulty. The rush of tourists that came with improved means of communication and the development of railways, roads, and inns throughout the frequented and more accessible parts of Switzerland, could not be without effect upon mountaineering. The change at first showed itself in a change of habit of the

systematic climber, the man for whom Alpine climbing takes the place of fishing or shooting. Ceasing to be a traveller he has acquired the habit of settling down for his holiday in a comfortably furnished centre, whence he makes a series of ascents of the high mountains within reach.

Previously mountaineering was one of the best forms of training for a traveller, and indeed supplied, for busy persons whose annual holiday must be short, experience of all the charms, excitements, and delights which reward the explorer of distant and unknown regions of the earth. The object of the journey now to be described was to discover whether the time had not come when a return might be made to the habits of Alpine pioneers. Of course the mystery is gone from the Alps, how completely none but climbers know. Almost every mountain and point of view of even third-rate importance has been ascended, most by many routes. Almost every gap between two peaks has been traversed as a pass. The publications of some dozen mountaineering societies have recorded these countless expeditions in rows of volumes of appalling length. Of late years vigorous attempts have been made to co-ordinate this mass of material in the form of Climbers' Guides, dealing with particular districts, wherein every peak and pass is dealt with in strict geographical succession and every different route and all the variations of each route are set forth, with references to the volumes in which they have been described at length by their discoverers. Nearly half the Alps has been treated in this manner, but the work has taken fourteen years, and of course the whole requires periodic revision.

It occurred to me that it was now possible, taking the whole range of the Alps, to devise a route, or rather a combination of climbs, the descent from each ending at the starting-point for the next, so that a climber might begin at one extremity of the snowy range and walk up and down through its midst to the other extremity over

a continuous series of peaks and passes. The Alps, of course, though spoken of as a range, are not a single line of peaks, but a series of locally parallel ridges covering a region. There is no continuous Alpine ridge stretching from one end of the region to the other. It would be possible to devise a countless variety of combinations of peaks and passes, each of which would fulfil the conditions of my plan. Some would take years to carry out, for they would lead over peaks that can only be ascended under exceptionally good conditions of weather.

The route selected had to be capable of execution within three months of average weather, which is a mixture of good and bad, with the bad predominating. It was also essential that it should lead as continuously as possible through snowy regions and that it should traverse as many of the more interesting and well-known groups as possible.

By beginning with the smaller ranges at the southern extremity of the Alpine region we were able to start early in the summer season with the maximum of time before us. The Colle di Tenda, over which goes the road from Turin to Ventimiglia, is regarded as the southern limit of the Alps and the boundary between them and the Apennines. Thither therefore we transferred ourselves on the 1st of June. The first division of the journey was thence to Mont Blanc, which naturally had to be crossed; the line of route therefore lay partly in France, but chiefly in Italy, the Dauphiny mountains being of necessity omitted as lying aside of the direct way. At Mont Blanc we had to choose between two main possible ways. We might go along the southern Pennine, Lepontine, and other ranges, or by the northern Oberland ridge and its eastward continuations. I chose the northern route as being shorter and, to me, more novel. Arriving thus at the eastern extremity of Switzerland the general line to be followed across Tirol was obvious, the final goal being the Ankogel, the last snowy peak in the direction of Vienna, some two hundred miles from that city.

The party assembled at the Colle di Tenda for this expedition was rather a large one as Alpine parties go. I was fortunate enough to secure as companion my friend Mr. E. A. FitzGerald, an experienced climber. He brought with him two well-known guides—J. B. Aymonod and Louis Carrel, both of Valtournanche, a village near the south foot of the Matterhorn. Carrel is famous as one of the guides who accompanied Mr. Whymper to the Andes. For the first part of the journey I engaged my old Himalayan companion, the guide Mattias Zurbriggen of Macugnaga, and I was also accompanied by two of the Gurkhas (natives of Nepal) who were with me in the Himalayas, to wit, Lance Naick Amar Sing Thapa and Lance Naick Karbir Bura Thoki, both of the first battalion of the 5th Gurkha Rifles. It was through the kindness of my friend Colonel Gaselee that these men were permitted to come home and join our caravan. The Gurkhas are admirable scramblers and good weight-carriers, but they were not experienced in the craft of climbing snow-mountains. They had begun to learn the use of axe and rope in India, but it was felt that, if they could spend a further period of three months at work under first-rate guides, their mountaineering education would be advanced and they would be better able thereafter to assist in Himalayan exploration, which up till now has been so neglected. It was in view of giving them experience of snow and glacier work that our route was devised to keep as far as possible to snow and to avoid rather than seek rock-scrambling, in which they were already proficient.

Fortunate people who live in islands or without bellicose neighbours have no idea of the excitements of frontier travel in Central Europe. So long as you merely want to cross from one country into another there is only the customs-house nuisance to be fought through; but if you try to settle down near a frontier and enjoy yourself in a normal fashion, walking to pretty

points of view and staring about as you please, all sorts of annoyances and impediments arise in your way ; whilst if you wish to travel along the frontier these become indefinitely multiplied. It is useless to try dodging gendarmes and folks of that kidney on the Franco-Italian frontier. They are too numerous, active, and suspicious. We knew this and made what we supposed were sufficient arrangements beforehand. Ministers and august personages were approached by one another on our behalf, friendly promises were given, and the way seemed smooth before us ; but we started along it too soon, not bearing in mind that governmental machineries, though they may ultimately grind exceeding small, do so with phenomenal slowness. When therefore we actually came upon frontier ground we were not expected and the ways were often closed against us. It was not till just as we were leaving Italy for the unsuspecting and more travelled regions of Upper Savoy and Switzerland that the spreading wave of orders and recommendations in our favour, washing outwards from the official centre, broke against the mountain wall and produced a sudden profusion of kindnesses and attentions which, if they had come a fortnight sooner, would have made our journey more pleasant, if not more successful.

As it was, however, we were treated in the Maritime and Cottian Alps as probable spies. The peaks and passes we wanted to climb were closed against us, and we had continually to change our plans in order to avoid fortresses and the like futilities, sight of which in the far distance without permission is a crime. Nor were these political difficulties the only ones we had to contend against in the first part of our journey. Eager to be early on the ground, we arrived too early. None of the inns were open in the upper valleys and the high pastures and huts were deserted, so that we had to descend low for food and often to sleep in the open air. Moreover, to make matters worse, the season

was backward. The mass of winter snow had waited till May to fall, and in June the mountains were draped with a white vesture proper to the month of March. Ascents which should have been simple thus became dangerous or even impossible from avalanches. It was, therefore, in every sense a misfortune that our start was not delayed at least a fortnight. Future travellers will do well to postpone an intended visit to the Maritimes for climbing purposes till the 21st June at earliest.

From Limone, where our journey may be said to have commenced, to Lend, near Wildbad Gastein, where it ended, we traversed on foot about 1000 miles. The distance wheeled off on the large scale maps with a Morris's Chartometer, came out almost exactly 900 miles; but as no account was taken of the minor zigzags, which form so considerable a part of every mountain ascent, an additional allowance must be made for them. It must also be remembered that the horizontal projection of a route, as on a map, is shorter than the up and down hypotenuses actually traversed. In allowing therefore an extra hundred miles for these considerations, we are not, I believe, claiming the full extent of our debt. We let it go at a thousand miles for round numbers' sake. We were eighty-six days between start and finish, and during sixty-five of them we were on the march; the remaining twenty-one were devoted for the most part to writing, though one or two were absolute holidays, and perhaps half a dozen were days of halt caused by storm.

We climbed in all twenty-one peaks and thirty-nine passes. If the weather had been better, the peaks would have been more and the passes fewer; but the weather was oftener bad than good, and we had to push forward by such routes as were practicable in the teeth of storms. It is curious that throughout the whole summer, we were not once caught by a thunderstorm on the mountains.

I am not without hope that the publication of this book, and especially of the final chapter, so kindly contributed by the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge, the most learned expert in Alpine topography that has ever lived, will induce others to follow our example and set forth to see the whole Alpine region. Such a course may be specially recommended to beginners in mountaineering, who will thereby derive more experience in a given time and at less expense than they could attain by settling themselves down in one or two well-known centres. My advice to a beginner is this. Let him spend his first season in one of the great centres, climbing under the tutelage of a first-rate guide. Having thus learnt the rudiments of his craft, let him boldly strike forth with a couple of amateurs, if possible more experienced than himself, and taking a series of easy expeditions, let him traverse the mountains of Tirol without guides. In succeeding years he will be able to pass through the higher and more difficult ranges, climbing always in good company, but only occasionally taking a guide. Three or four seasons of this kind of work will give him all the experience needed for mountain-exploration in any part of the world. He will acquire a knowledge of the Alps as a range or region of mountains and not merely as a casual assemblage of crags affording gymnastic problems. If as he goes along he pays attention to geological phenomena and keeps his eyes open to all matters of natural beauty and interest, he will derive not merely health but education of a high order from each successive summer holiday.

A long mountain traverse, consisting of a series of ascents and descents, conveys a truer idea of any mountain region than can be yielded by a number of climbs radiating from a centre. Observe that the valleys in any mountain area are depressions below its average plane, just as the peaks are eminences left standing above the average. A traveller who approaches a group of mountains by way

of the valleys, and climbs each peak from some valley centre, naturally receives the impression that the valley level is the normal one, and that whatever is above that level is part of a peak. The climber, however, who takes a line across a series of peaks and ridges cannot avoid more justly regarding the whole mountain-mass as an elevated region, from whose mean level he descends into excavated hollows, or mounts to the summits of protuberances, which are in fact the relatively insignificant ruins of a formerly yet more elevated mass. Thus he grasps the nature of the mountain region more truly than a 'Centrist' can, and when he stands on some lofty eminence commanding a wide extending panorama, the view is self-explained in all its great features.

It is a well-recognised fact that the size of mountains can only be appreciated by an experienced eye. New-comers to the hills always under-estimate, sometimes absurdly under-estimate, magnitudes and distances. It is only when a man has climbed peaks, and learned by close inspection the actual dimensions of such details as bergschrunds, couloirs, cornices, and the like, that he is enabled to see them from afar off for what they are. The beginner has to learn size by disappointment and fatigue. The shoulder that seems so near takes hours to reach. He begins by distrusting his estimates and ends by acquiring the power of estimating justly. What applies to individual peaks seen from a moderate distance,—the Lyskamm or Monte Rosa, for instance, from the Gorner Grat,—applies with yet more force to panoramic and distant views. The eye, even of an experienced 'Centrist,' probably fails to attain any true conception of the area of a view by roving over its multitudinous details. When, however, a man has traversed the depth of a mountain region on foot, and climbed a succession of peaks and passes, beholding from each the next and the last and others later to come or more remotely left behind, he has within him a scale whereby to measure the depth as well as the extent of a view. He per-

ceives, without need to reason, the correct relation of the parts in all the visible area that at any moment surrounds him.

An obvious advantage possessed by the wanderer from end to end of the Alpine region is his power of observing and comparing the qualities of the scenery in different parts and of gaining a clear idea of the larger natural features. He learns to think of the Maritime Alps as a ridge lying between sea and plain and commanding views of both. The Cottians he remembers for their wave-like sequence washing south; the Graians for the seeming irregularity of their arrangement and the loveliness of their valleys and hillside tarns. Mont Blanc enthrones itself once for all in his mind as monarch of the whole range. The limestone wall-peaks that fringe the northern range from the Buet to the Glärnisch and yet further east, come to be thought of as a single feature characteristic of the region as a whole, comparable, in this sense, to the long depression of the Rhone and Rhine valleys. All the great groups, Pennines, Oberland and so forth, come to be known not by the individual peaks they bear—mere trifling Matterhorns, Finsteraarhorns and the like—but as huge masses of the folded earth-crust, compared with which peaks are details of small account.

When we started walking in June, it is probable that none of us were in very good condition. Our early ascents were made in a region which nowhere rises to a high level, and for some days we did not reach an altitude of 10,000 feet. At this time we frequently experienced discomfort from the effect of diminished atmospheric pressure. The fact appears to be worth record, for I do not remember ever before noticing any similar sensations in Europe at so low an elevation. I shall describe only my own experiences, but they were similar to those of the rest of the party. I have said that we were not in good mountaineering condition, but I was not in bad condition either. I had been taking two

hours' exercise with daily regularity for several months and could walk twenty miles, at any rate, without inconvenient fatigue. I was in fact distinctly pleased with myself the first day in the hills, and thought I had never begun an Alpine season so well. My disgust was all the greater next morning, when, at about 7000 feet, all the symptoms overtook me in a mild form that we used to feel at about 19,000 feet in the Karakorams. There was the same peculiar fatigue, the same discomfort if the regularity of breathing were interfered with, the same disinclination to stoop or permit the arms to press against the sides. I should probably not have noticed these effects in detail if Himalayan experience had not familiarised me with each of them in an acute form. The faintest suggestion of them was therefore immediately perceived and recognised for what it was.

It is certain that the diminution in the supply of oxygen to the blood is the cause of so-called mountain sickness. In order that the blood may be supplied at a high level with the same amount of oxygen in a given time as it is accustomed to be brought in contact with at sea-level, a proportionately greater volume of air must be passed through the lungs in that time. This may be accomplished by breathing deeper or more rapidly; in either case a greater amount of work is thrown upon certain muscles than they are accustomed to. If a man has a generally strong and healthy frame or possesses the swift adaptability which is the special characteristic of youth, he may be able to meet such a demand without inconvenience. As a rule, however, the special muscles must be brought into training, and, for this, time is required which will probably be longer for an older man than for a youngster. Before I was thirty years of age, I could go from England to the Alps and climb the first day; it takes me now longer every year to get into climbing condition, and this without reference to the general condition for low-level exercise in which I may start.

These remarks seemed worth recording because one so often hears climbers state that, having never experienced any discomfort from diminished atmospheric pressure, they believe men mistake lack of condition and fatigue for such discomfort. The fact is that lack of condition manifests itself in this form, but it requires closer observation than most climbers devote to matters passing under their notice to differentiate between the symptoms of mere fatigue, the same at all levels, and those of lack of condition in a man's breathing apparatus. During the course of the summer and when our condition left nothing to be desired I yet on several occasions noticed trifling indications of the same symptoms; once, for instance, late at night in the Mutton See hut, and several times after drinking mulled red wine. My belief is that the vigour of every man begins to be diminished at a very moderate elevation above sea-level, and diminishes further with every increment of height till a level is reached where even the dullest observer perceives that something is wrong. To find a scale of comparison for one's energies at different levels is the difficulty. It is easy to tell when one is doing one's best, but to compare the efficiency of that best at various times and under varying circumstances is not at all easy, and for the unobservant is impossible.

A few remarks on the equipment carried on this journey will be less out of place here than in the body of the narrative. We carried with us a Mummery tent (made by Edgington) and two eider-down sleeping bags, so that we were independent of shelter as far as Fitz-Gerald and I were concerned. Each of us had a small ( $\frac{1}{4}$ -plate) camera, mine being a 'Luzo' which I have used for years with continued satisfaction. The Eastman film supplied for it was very good. As a head-covering for climbing purposes I employ, and intend for the future to adhere to, a turban, formed of a long strip of soft woollen stuff wound about the head. This serves as protection against both heat and cold. The end can be

wound about the neck and face. The whole strip can be used as an extra garment and is invaluable in case of being benighted. In valleys the strip is rolled up and put in a knapsack, whilst on the hillside there is no populace to stare and a man may wear what he pleases without becoming conspicuous. Amar Sing's turban was made of a good big Kashmir shawl, which he used as a rug at night. In a storm on one occasion he made a tent of it, under which four men took shelter. Of course all of us who had them wore *pattis* for gaiters.<sup>1</sup> Aymonod and Carrel were so envious of our comfort in snow that they both declared their intention of providing themselves with *pattis* on the earliest occasion. The difficulty is that they have to be specially woven. It is no use cutting a strip of cloth five or six inches wide and three yards long out of a broader piece of stuff and hemming the edges; they will inevitably fray. *Pattis* must end at both sides with selvage edges; that is to say, they must be specially woven in a narrow loom. Carrel said that he would try to introduce the industry of *patti*-weaving into the Valtournanche. It should be profitable. Our own Home Industries Association might find it worth their while to take up this manufacture.

<sup>1</sup> *Pattis* are stout woollen bandages, one for each leg. They should be about five inches wide and at least three yards long. They are wound round the leg from the ankle to the knee

## CHAPTER II

### THE MARITIME ALPS

THE assembling of a party from various places is always a troublesome process, however completely arrangements have been made. Mr. E. A. FitzGerald was to come from Florence. His guides, J. B. Aymonod (M N O we called him) and Louis Carrel, one of Whymper's companions in the Andes, were due from Valtournanche, Mattias Zurbriggen, my old Himalayan companion, was to arrive from Macugnaga; and I came from England with the two Gurkhas, Lance Naick Amar Sing Thapa and Lance Naick Karbir Bura Thoki.

The date fixed for our rendezvous at Turin was the 1st of June 1894, and by 8 A.M. we were all in my room there, surrounded by a chaos of unpacked baggage, consisting largely, as usual, of unnecessary things. The number of our party was raised to eight by the addition of FitzGerald's excellent Austrian servant, the polyglot James. As our appearance in the streets of Turin was occasion for the assemblage of a crowd, we were not encouraged to delay. By two o'clock we were in the Cuneo train, where, with a traveller's usual lack of foresight, we reserved for ourselves two window-seats on the sunny side. The afternoon was hot, and we fairly roasted. Smoke entered at the windows and so blackened us that there became little to choose between us and the Gurkhas, in the matter of complexion. We passed through the fertile Piedmontese plain, by fields bright with poppies, with blue hills all around, fading up into the soft clouds that follow rainy weather. Here and there, through a valley opening, were glimpses of snowy peaks, which we could not identify. Patches of

snow lingered low on their flanks, but for the most part the snow-line had already mounted to within 1500 feet of its summer level.

The hours dragged themselves slowly along, each marked by the passing of some town, with an old brick fortress cornered with round towers, its walls pierced at regular intervals with holes for scaffolding. The castle of Turin, which every one knows, is typical of mediæval Piedmontese fortresses. At Cuneo we waited an hour. Energetic persons would have utilised the time to see such sights as the place may afford; we more wisely dined, and smoked our cigarettes on the rampart, looking towards the foot-hills of the Ligurian Alps.

We started on again by another train for Limone, timed to accomplish the intervening twenty miles in two hours. The official estimate of its speed was justified by the event. It was a friendly sort of train; dogs ran beside it for a mile or two; people shouted from its windows to their friends in the fields; the guard was obliging enough to go off at one station to the neighbouring village and buy us a couple of Virginia cigars, amusing to light, though less satisfactory to smoke. The train wound up a charming valley, and crept through a series of tunnels, some of which are corkscrew in form, after the St. Gotthard manner. The slopes on both sides were richly wooded, and sometimes dyed scarlet with withered birches. A stream of clear water babbled below in graceful curves and the old road wound beside it. At last we reached Limone, and halted for the night at a simple inn. The railway is in active construction above the village, and is destined to be carried through a long tunnel down to the Mediterranean at Ventimiglia.

*June 2.*

Our intention was to start at five o'clock this morning. We in fact started at 7.30, and then only with a struggle, for the baggage had to be divided into two portions—half to be carried on our backs and those of our men,

the other half to go round with James and meet us at Castledelfino. One is liable to carry what will not be needed, and to send away the most necessary things. After walking a quarter of a mile we recollected that the camera and field glasses had been left behind and simultaneously the breathless James was observed hurrying after us for needful keys. The road was broad and excellent. We marched briskly up it, cutting off the zigzags so boldly that we lost sight of it altogether, and were contentedly advancing up a wrong valley. Sentries turned us back, and revealed the fact that the whole countryside is covered with fortified places, from the very sight of which civilian eyes are debarred. Without permissions from high authorities it is impossible to go anywhere in this part of the Maritime Alps. On regaining the proper road we hastened to catch our companions. The morning was bright, and every one we met seemed gay. Carters, hauling with their teams loads of bricks for railway bridges, cracked their whips as they went. A man came running down the hill with a hand-cart, so balanced by a friend seated on its back edge that the weight of him in the shafts was almost counterpoised. The vehicle ran itself down the hill, and the carter's feet only touched the ground every ten yards or so. It was as good as a glissade.

Thus, in what should have been an hour's walk, but took nearly two, we reached the mouth of the tunnel, which goes under the Colle di Tenda, and is some two kilometres long. We sat down to cool before entering its chilly shadows, where water drips from the vault in a continual shower. When we started in, most with one consent began to shout and sing, and the others that followed did the same. The hollow place rang with

‘O Jean Baptiste,  
Why have you greased  
My little dog's nose with tar?’

and the like classic ditties; and the Gurkhas, not to be

outdone, raked up reminiscences of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, learned from Roudebush in Kashmir.

The tunnel was sixty-two lamps long; we ultimately passed the lot and made our exit through the iron doors at the end. Workmen, blasting an apparently aimless hole and chucking the stuff down into the stream, were the first beings we saw in the daylight. They directed us to the neighbouring Albergo del Traforo, where we hoped to find the man who was to procure permission for us to climb in the neighbouring hills. He was not in, so Zurbriggen went up the road to the first military post inquiring for him, and, by means of the telephone, succeeded in bringing him down. We presented letters from our friends of the Italian Alpine Club in Turin, and these, with some help from S. Maurice (what he had to do with it I could not make out, but he was in it somehow), apparently put a better complexion on our prospects. Having nothing more to do, we ordered a meal, though we were not a bit hungry, and resigned ourselves to being bored.

This occupation was interrupted by the coming of the man under the patronage of S. Maurice who was to work the oracle for us. He, Zurbriggen, and I started off to walk up the hill and interview the military authorities about our *permesso*. We were armed with letters from the presidents of various Alpine clubs, *viséd* passports, and other documents. In addition, a letter had been written on our behalf from the Royal Geographical Society to the Italian Embassy in London and this had been communicated to the War Office in Rome. We had every reason to expect a favourable result. We climbed about 500 feet to a house occupied by soldiers, where we had to stop whilst telephonic communication was held with the upper regions. I only heard the near end of the talk: 'An English gentleman with his guide.' 'Wants to see the colonel.' 'Has letters for the colonel.' 'One English gentlemen.' 'English.' 'His guide, his domestic.' 'On foot,' and so forth. Ulti-

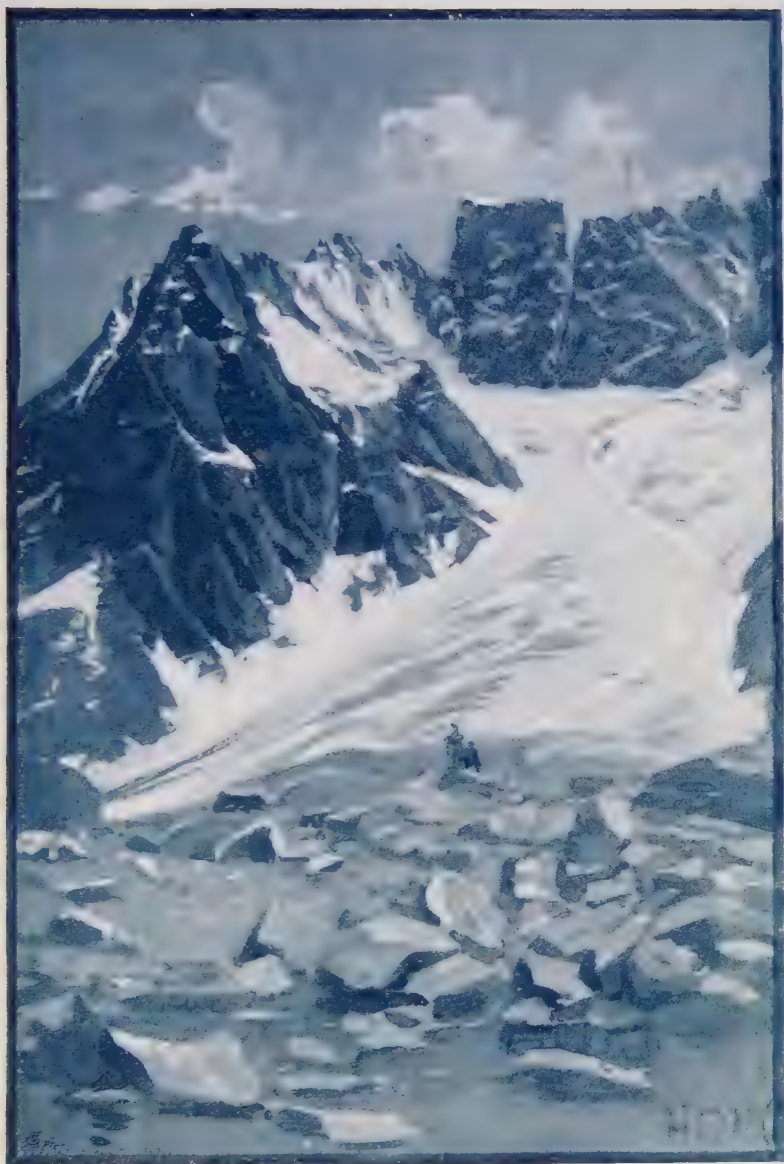
mately we were told the colonel was asleep or out; we must wait. We waited an hour. The captain then rang us up. We might come on, provided that the man under the patronage of S. Maurice came with us. We climbed a thousand feet or more, and entered cloudland. We were close to the fort of the colonel. A ghostly captain emerged from the mist. The colonel had sent him to see our letters, and to assure us that we were undoubtedly most respectable persons, but that, etc. Our letters were read, and the captain went off with them to the colonel, whilst we sat down for half an hour and threw stones at our ice-axes. The clouds rolled and played about us, opening occasional glimpses towards, but never of, the southern sea, which we were told is visible from this point. The captain returned with the news that we could not have permission to go anywhere in the neighbourhood, except back through the tunnel or down to Tenda. We might go to Mont Clapier, or elsewhere in that direction, but this fortified circle of the hills was closed to all the world. He continued to assure us of his distinguished consideration, and then down we went, followed by three soldiers with loaded rifles to watch us off the premises.

I see I have forgotten to say what we came to the Colle di Tenda for. This pass is chosen as a convenient eastern limit to the Maritime Alps. East of it the Apennines are by some considered to commence. As a matter of fact they do not; the two ranges overlap one another for a certain distance—the one rising eastwards, the other, parallel to and south of it, rising westwards. But for practical purposes the Alps may be counted as beginning at the Tenda Pass, and the first peak of the range is the Rocca dell' Abisso. It is a trifling hump, but being number one we wanted to climb it. Unfortunately it commands a view of all the forts. A mule-path has been made up it, and a sentry stands on the top. Mont Clapier, which comes next, is the first real peak, and to this we had now to turn our attention.

*June 3.*

To start at 4 A.M. for a mountain is one thing—to start at that hour for a tunnel is quite another. There is nothing to awake one in a monotonous tramp in the dark. FitzGerald set the pace. His habit is to carry no knapsack but to fill his large pockets with things. It takes him some time to get up momentum; when that is accomplished all he has to do is to keep pace with his pockets. Hungry, for we had not breakfasted; sleepy, for our night had been short; footsore and disgusted, we reached the station at Limone, entered the train and went to sleep. A moment later we awakened at Borgo S. Dalmazzo. We found our way to an inn through a gathering crowd. The gendarmes marked us down as suspicious characters, and three of them marched in and accosted the guides. Satisfied for the moment, they retreated, but soon returned and took Louis Carrel into custody for having no passport. He was ultimately released, and we were enabled to finish our breakfast. In the corner of the dirty room was a life-sized marble statue of a mostly nude man, wearing the sort of crown with many points that suggests the Old Testament, and gesturing in a vague manner with a lot of fingers broken off at the joints. He was standing on a pile of children's heads.

Zurbriggen and I sallied forth into the town, and found our way to a church where a confirmation was going on. 'It must be at least six years,' said he, 'since a confirmation was held here; you can see that by the age of the children.' White-hooded girls filled the north side of the nave; round-headed, freshly cropped boys filled, and over-filled, the other. There were at least three boys to two girls. 'That is as it happens,' said Zurbriggen; 'in our valley last year twenty-two boys were born and eleven girls; sometimes there are as few as three girls.' The church was dressed in red. The silver altar and the mitred personage before it, with his broideder cloak lined with



PUNTA ARGENTERA FROM THE NORTH



green and held back to show the lining by two red-robed assistants, made an impressive picture. The bishop began his address: 'It is unfortunately six years since a confirmation was held in this place'—one to Zurbriggen.

The diligence was at last ready to start, and off it rolled groaning with all of us and two more men. I sat on the backless front seat, and slept the two and a half hours of the way. At Entraque I awoke. Had the valley been specially beautiful or interesting I should not have slept. No one sleeps through an eloquent sermon. Our fame had unfortunately spread to this remote inn. It procured for us good treatment, good provisions, and an exorbitant bill. When the cool of the afternoon came, we started on foot, intending to sleep at the Monighet chalets; but before we had gone 100 yards the way was blocked before us by soldiers, who had followed us up from S. Dalmazzo. We showed our papers, and they were satisfied at last, and gave us information that was useful. On all these occasions we were politely received by our interlocutors; but let it be understood that they rise from the ground on all sides, and that no climber can hope to reach ground which they are not willing he should reach.

At last we got off, and made our way up a stony mule-path for three hours, following a wild valley and its branch to a wilder cirque amongst the hills, where we chose a site for our little tent by a lake, and a place of shelter under a rock for our followers. A grassy talus sloped up from the calm black lake to rocky beds of snow. The end of the lake rested against a wall of rock, over which an ice-fall once descended. Above that peeped crests and summits deeply snow-covered, and tipped with rose by the setting sun. As the pink passed up to the cirrus above, the Gurkhas pitched the tent among newly opened flowers—yellow pansies, white violets, cowslips, and forget-me-nots,

haunted by the ghosts of mountain lovers. Warm airs enveloped us, and a gentle drift of high mist from the south roofed in the sky.

*June 4.*

At 4.15 A.M. we started to climb the Argentera, highest of the Maritime Alps, for the glimpse we had of Mont Clapier was enough to show that it was in no condition yet to be ascended from the north. The light of dawn was in the north, as we passed round the lake and zigzagged up the cliff beyond it. The pool was blacker than ever. The waterfall that leaps towards it, as from the rock's heart, looked grand in the vague morning shadows. All the paths in this country are horrible to follow, for they are made of loose limestone fragments that never bind, and they form the track of streamlets from the snow. In an hour and a half we were at the top of the cliff and the far-off Piedmontese plain was beneath us, enframed by hills of striking form, all deeply enveloped in snow. As we approached our breakfast-place we saw, close at hand and little disturbed by our presence, a herd of chamois. They are seldom shot in this district, for it is a royal preserve. 'They feed here like so many sheep,' said Zurbriggen. The sight of them put the guides into a state of wildest enthusiasm. We had to descend 300 feet to an unoccupied alp, near some ponds, and then, after crossing the flat, ascend steep grass-slopes towards our col. It was a dull side valley that reached up before us, with a wall of rocks on our left and rock-slopes on our right. The only fine object in view was the range of hills behind, white with belated snow. It soon became evident that the Argentera in its present condition could not be climbed. Avalanches were pouring off it on all sides, and its rock walls were heavy with snow ready to fall. We were not sorry. Being as yet out of condition, a hard day's work presented little attraction to us. We halted often, sitting on the grass amongst green lichen-covered rocks, with rock-wall's

about us, avalanches booming, and a fresh air stroking our hot faces. Overhead was a deep blue sky, wherein the heavenly powers were spinning cirrus webs. Falling waters sang to us their eternal mountain song, how that all winter long frost had bound them in prison, but now the sun had come to set them free, and they were off to the sweet fields and bright villages, to Venice and the sea.

From the alp to the Colle del Chiapous should take about two hours' steady walking; how many hours we took is not revealed. The snow was knee-deep for the last half-mile, and avalanches fell across the track. I toiled after Zurbriggen.

'I can easily keep ahead of you uphill,' he said, 'but not downhill.'

'That is because you are heavy,' I replied.

'Well, if I'm heavy I'm not fat; though fat does not weigh much either, for you see fat is drink, but flesh is good meat, and that weighs well.'

We sat by the shepherd's hut on the col for some time and watched the avalanches falling down the couloir and débris-fan which we ought to have ascended. Its foot is close to the col. Our descent led over more avalanche tracks, but no falling snow came near us. We had one or two rotten and almost perilously steep slopes to pass before we could glissade. In an hour we were at the Gias Laedrot, and the other face of the Argentera was before us, with its steep couloir and the remarkable peaks at its head. One of these has a vertical face, and is formed of light-coloured limestone, splashed with a strip of red, just like Gusherbrum. FitzGerald photographed it, whilst I took him. Presently we were off again, following a good mule-path which led to a corner, where we saw plumb down into the luxuriant Valdieri glen and looked on to the roof of the large hotel of the Baths, planted below steep woods on fine mountain-sides, where shadowed grassy deeps and gullies were mingled with sunlit knees and elbows of rock. A chamois darted away from our feet and ran down as

though making for the high-road. The hotel was not yet opened and no accommodation could be had, but a small detachment of soldiers was quartered in a barn, and their little 'Pinte' supplied us with wine, coffee, a table, and chairs. I hoped we might replenish our failing stock of tobacco here, and inquired of the man if he had any cigars? 'I'm sorry, sir,' he answered, 'but *io mastico*, and so don't require them.' We sat outside the dirty little place, took our meal, and did our writing. The day closed, with a slight gathering of clouds both overhead and low down on the hillsides.

No; it did not so close. The gendarmes had been watching us, and after dinner they pounced, demanding 'papers.' We gave them a lot, which they found poor stuff. My passport they regarded as made for Monsieur Kimberley; besides as it was *viséd* for France, it must be useless for Italy. We finally produced a copy of the *Piedmontese Gazette*, giving, under the heading 'Sport,' an account of our doings. This satisfied them. 'That,' they said, 'is something like a paper, worth all the rest of your letters and passports together. Keep it carefully, and always show it to gendarmes. It will be worth your while.'

After this excitement we took a short walk, and only then discovered the marvellous picturesque charms of the place—the walks in the woods, the view from the bridge, the hot spring in the hillside. Lovers of natural beauty should take note of the Bagni di Valdieri. Clouds thickened overhead, but Aymonod bade us have no care. 'I suffer from rheumatism in one leg, but it is now at rest, so the weather will be fine.' He was a true prophet. We retired to our tent before dark, but the coffee we had drunk, and a perambulating watchman with a lantern, kept sleep away.

June 5.

To-day we were to have crossed by a col to Vinadio, where we should certainly have been arrested, but fortune willed otherwise. It was eight o'clock before we lazily

started. When one starts early one hurries to gain all possible benefit from the shade, but a late start renders such haste futile; so we dawdled from the first. The valley-path was alive with soldiers carrying straw-stuffed mattresses. They went for all the world like Balti coolies, and sat down whenever the corporal's back was turned.

I said to him, 'You have a fine job on hand with all these lazy men.'

'Oh no!' he replied, '*fa divertimento.*'

In an hour and a quarter we turned up the second royal hunting-path, zigzagging up the hill to the north. The flowers were delightful, and of numerous varieties, all fresh and young, not a faded blossom amongst them. A few feet up the zigzags we overlooked the beautiful old lake basin, flat and green, where the king's hunting-box is built—a square of buildings like an Oriental *serai*. A waterfall brightened the end of the lawn, and a fine cirque of mountains surrounded this charming retreat. Thenceforward we plodded upwards, till we came to a division of paths, no such division being shown on the map. Since the Fall, everybody goes wrong on these occasions; we went to the left instead of to the right, and so reached, after toiling up a variety of snow-slopes, of which one was rotten and avalanchy, a corniced col (the Colle di Val Miana). The compass indicated north unexpectedly far to the right, and the lake we looked for was not in view. Still, the map is in many places so inaccurate that this did not unsettle us.

On calling for provisions we found that the men had devoured all the fresh meat at breakfast, and that the day was to be a bread-and-butter one. FitzGerald and I purloined the end of a sausage in revenge. It was easily secreted, but the straits to which we were put to eat it furtively made the possession a doubtful blessing. The view from our perch was rather fine, as all such views must be, but none of the great peaks were in sight. Viso and Argentera were hidden, but westward we overlooked a series of white mountain waves, washing southwards, with winter snow like foam drifting down their backs

In descending the first 1000 feet of steep snow wall we started an avalanche, which cleared the way before us to the level floor of the cirque at the head of the valley. We bent round leftward, and the valley's mouth opened before us. In a moment we recognised in the hills beyond, our friends of the morning! We were going fast towards Valdieri once more, and the side valley we were in was the Val di Valrossa.<sup>1</sup> In fact, we had mounted one side valley, crossed an intermediate rib, and were descending another side valley. It was too late to retrace our steps. There was nothing to be done but return to the Baths, and spend a second night there. I was minded to be annoyed, till a moment's reflection convinced me that the day had been delightful; and that one expedition was just as good as another. There was no chance now of being arrested; that was a loss.

Coming to a grassy flat, we halted in a mood to praise everything. The air was bright; flowers saluted us from every chink of rock; the tempered sun shone abroad over everything, and everywhere water was spurting, and hurrying, crystal clear, over grass and rocks, whilst the streams were in unusual flood. Reaching the valley, we found the river broad and full, of a deep indigo colour in the low falling afternoon sunlight. Where the water bent at the top of a fall the sun struck through the body of it, and lit it up from within with a shimmering green light, such as every one remembers who has seen Niagara. The Baths were reached at evening and our tent was set up in its old position. The wind rose to a gale, and howled all night long amongst the trees; but the tent stood firm, and we slept a perfect sleep till next day's dawn.

<sup>1</sup> Our actual expedition was this. We had started correctly up the King's path; then we diverged to the left into the Val Miana instead of bending round to the col W. of Monte Matto, which we intended to cross. The col we did cross was at the head of the Val Miana. We might still have gone from the head of the Val di Valrossa to the Lago Soprano della Sella by an easy pass if we had found out our mistake in time.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COTTIAN ALPS

*June 6.*

ONE of the rules of our journey being never to attempt any expedition twice, we had to travel round by the valleys to our next climb. By all accounts we should not be permitted to do anything at Vinadio, and the route from Vinadio to Prazzo is not exciting. So we determined to make direct for Prazzo by the quickest valley route, and thence cross the Pelvo d'Elva to Casteldelfino.

We started at six o'clock on a lovely morning. The valley-floor was covered by a writhing mist, silvery in the sunshine. The river, still crystal clear and over full, kept us company down one of the fairest dales it has ever been my delight to follow. Great fallen crags diversified the wayside; the hills were broken by rock and grass-slopes into light and shadow. All things growing looked young and fresh; the turns of the way yielded new pictures from moment to moment. Plunging beneath the mist, we found it opaque here, transparent there. It curled and twisted about us, revealing in magic frames jutting rocks, and aspiring peaks. Thus Nature sometimes comes to the help of man. In almost every view there is a part which, if isolated, possesses those elements of balance and composition, in line or light and shade, which make it an artistic unity. The trained eye finds these for itself, and bounds them by its field of attention; but on rare occasions Nature is amiable and supplies the frame, so that even the dullard may detect the charm.

An hour's walk or so along the road took us to a

little copse, such as one sees in Dürer's engravings. We could not but halt a while in its shadow and let the forgotten clock go round. Presently we came to the opening of a side valley at S. Anna, where on the one hand a gorgeous waterfall, many-terraced, thundered down between picturesque houses, and on the other the King's hunting-box stood amongst trees on a grassy flat. The valley opened somewhat, and became more luxuriant. Soft clouds gathered overhead, casting upon the hills a splendid purple mantle. Where the Entraque valley joins is an open area, endowed with a charm of spaciousness and wealth such as only the lower Italian valleys possess. We plodded on a mile or two over a dusty flat, and re-entered Valdieri, where we lunched and hired a carriage to take us and the packs to Borgo S. Dalmazzo, whither the guides proceeded on foot.

After lunch the inevitable gendarme appeared, bonneted in all the glory of a cocked hat, and armed with revolver, sword, and what-not. He had, as all of them have, excellent manners. He knew our names and much about us, where we had been and what we had done, and was now only desirous of satisfaction as to our identity. That attained he sat down and talked with us; told us how French troops were massed this year on the frontier, and how that accounted for their own unusual activity. They had already, he imagined, caught five French officers this spring sketching their forts. They were naturally, therefore, on the *qui vive*. He launched out in praise of the Baths of Valdieri and told us how they were re-opened by Carlo Alberto, but the Romans had first found them, when on the way to conquer France and the world. Those were great days. The Romans bathed wherever they found baths; that is why they became so great, for water makes men strong. Thus far the big bath-house had not paid well. The Company that built it failed. Now a hotel-keeper from S. Remo had taken it. He was a brave man, and would do well. We were going to Monte Viso, he heard; Monte Viso

was a fine mountain, far finer than the hills about there. He himself had climbed some mountains. There was an Englishman last year at Valdieri, who climbed hills and took photographs. He enjoyed himself greatly. Assuredly he would return, and so probably would we. With that he shook hands, refused our cigars and wine (he drank nothing, he said, and only smoked cigarettes), and was gone. FitzGerald lifted his pocket off the chair placed beside him to support it; we climbed into our crazy vehicle, and drove away.

The train took us from Borgo S. Dalmazzo to Cuneo, and a steam tram thence to Dronero, an exceptionally picturesque place with a machicolated bridge of two high wide arches, spanning a gorge cut into the valley floor. The river curls round, and the houses are built up to the edge of the bending gorge, with a cirque of hills behind them. In the market-place a gendarme accosted Zurbriggen. 'You are one of Mr. Conway's party; we know all about you, where you have been and where you are going—there is nothing that we don't know.' We took our places in a tumble-down diligence which started from the 'Inn of the Iron Arm of Giacomo Rittatore.' An hour's drive brought us to S. Damiano as the evening lights were gathering, and heavy rain was beginning to fall.

*June 7.*

At last, after good food freshly and well cooked, we had a long night in bed. We were early aroused by noises in the open space outside. It was the monthly market-day. The stalls were being set up, goods unpacked, and a multitude of country folk were gathering. Cows, goats, and sheep were in abundance, and sales went briskly forward, with all the gay chatter, the meeting of friends, and the greetings and haggings suitable to such occasions. Companies of soldiers marched from time to time through the crowd; baggage trains, mules, men on horseback and with led horses followed. It was an animated scene.

By eight o'clock our men marched away leaving us to follow with the baggage at a later hour. We devoted the forenoon to writing and the pleasure of idleness. We wandered amongst the market folk and noticed the strongly modelled, solemn faces of the men. Two met just before me, old men, like as brothers; they gazed steadfastly at one another and remained thus, unconscious that the fitful wind had carried both their hats aloft and that the crowd was laughing.

We inspected the great old *sala* of the inn, hung with huge seventeenth-century pictures, and sparsely furnished with what once were fine chairs and settees. In their tattered and forlorn condition they looked like stiff-backed aristocrats fallen on evil days, but clinging desperately to the remembrance of their ancient glory, and retaining their grand old manners.

The valley above S. Damiano is beautiful with a rare loveliness. Débris from the hillsides fills the floor across and makes a wide flat area. Through the deep bed of conglomerate thus formed the river has again cut a gorge, within which it gracefully winds. In long green or wooded slopes the mountains spread down on either side to the fertile flat; villages are planted on the edge of the lower ravine, the sides of which are precipitous, with birch-trees growing on their ledges, and here and there a waterfall leaping over them. The floor of the ravine is flat and broader than the stream, whose clear and hurrying waters encircle grassy lawns of wonderful verdure. As we drove along, gazing at the fair scenes thus revealed to us, we turned a corner, and a long tendril of wild rose in full blossom reached out from the rocks and arched the picture in. So entranced were we that an ice-axe, my companion for eighteen summers, leapt from the carriage and was not missed till we reached the trysting-place, where our men awaited us. Aymonod went back a mile or so to look for it. Meeting some peasants he asked them if they had seen such a thing in the way.

‘Yes,’ they answered; ‘lying in the middle of the road.’

‘Why did you not pick it up, then?’

‘Oh! why should we? It was not ours.’

And the next men he met said the same: ‘We saw it and left it; for it was not ours.’ It lay where it fell till Aymonod found and brought it safely back. I was foolishly glad to regain it.

A more beautiful walk than that upon which we now entered it would be impossible to imagine. We mounted slowly up zigzags, through the village of Stroppo and round the cirque of grass-slopes above it, all the gay afternoon. No meadows are sweeter than the meadows of Stroppo in early June, carpeted with flowers, here in masses of white, higher up dashed all across with gentian blue. We passed an old church, then another. Four of them stand in a row along a steep mountain arm. The view developed both into the entrancing valley, and over the Piedmontese plain. Dots of light, where the sun shone on white house walls, sparkled upon it; purple cloud-shadows strewed it; blue Apennines, over which a long wave of delicate cloud poured from the south to melt into violet mist upon the plain, bounded it far away.

In about two hours we rounded a col in the west side of the Stroppo basin and the similar and equally beautiful cirque of Elva opened before us, with the mass of the Pelvo beyond, and the Colle della Bicocca on our right. A bare precipitous buttress of rock plunged at our feet to invisible depths, an admirable contrast to the rounded green slopes and mysterious draperies of cloud and rain, through which the sun drove radiant shafts of light.

Thenceforward our way led—sometimes across green slopes rich in flowers, sometimes through woods of larch or birch, where the ground was green and soft beneath the trees as on the open hill. The simple inn at Elva received us at an early hour, and the excellent host worked hard to make us comfortable. The coffee that he produced seemed alone worth a journey from London.

*June 8.<sup>1</sup>*

At four o'clock I left with Zurbriggen and the Gurkhas. FitzGerald followed with his guides at six. Our paths circled and zigzagged round the fair hillside. In the south the Maritime Alps were widely spread within the purple loveliness of early morning, a high mist ranging like a roof far above them. The Gurkhas were constant in their praises of the quantity and excellence of the grass. 'It is not thus in our country. There the valleys are flat and green below, between walls of barren mountains, but here the grass climbs all the hills.' In two hours we passed a body of soldiers drilling, and so came to the Colle della Bicocca, where we halted for breakfast and looked across to Monte Viso, rising near at hand to the north. It is a poor-looking mountain from this side, neither grand in form nor imposing in mass. Its toothed crest was combing soft clouds that drifted over it. Presently there was a change and a puff of cloud came smoking off the peak. 'That,' I said to Karbir, reminding him of the legends of Bagrot, 'must be the smoke of the fairies' kitchen.'

A suspicious lieutenant arrived to interview us and would have it that we were French; we allayed his suspicions. A long, undulating ridge led from the Colle della Bicocca to the foot of the Pelvo d'Elva. Peak, ridge, and pass stood to one another as do the Dent Blanche, the Wandfluh, and the Col d'Hérens; the ascent of the peak is made by routes similar to those up the Dent Blanche. The analogy is a close one even to details. We walked leisurely in a hour to the foot of the peak, where we saw some grey hares among the débris.

<sup>1</sup> Pelvo d'Elva (3064 m. 10,053 ft.). Left Elva at 4 A.M., and walked in two hours to the Colle della Bicocca (2289 m.); thence west along the ridge in one hour to the foot of the peak. Hence Mr. FitzGerald ascended by the north-east arête, Mr. Conway and the Gurkhas bore left below the east face to the first couloir south of the arête. Climbed this to a hard place; bore back right to the north-east arête close to the top, reached in two hours from the foot of the couloir. Descent by easy snow-ridge to south-west shoulder, and down a steep snow-slope, at foot of which a path was found. The Colle della Bicocca was reached in one hour from the peak and Casteldelfino one hour later.



MOUNTAIN FROM NEAR CHESLEY



Bearing to the left we scrambled into the first couloir of the arête and proceeded to climb it. It was easy below, but steepened till we reached a point which for some time mocked our efforts. The rock was smooth, hard, and ledgeless. It curved forward over our heads. Zurbriggen climbed as far as he could to the left, then getting his back to the rock he curled round, for the moment facing and overhanging me, and so threw himself to the other side of the gully where he caught for an instant on the surface of all his person. One struggle, as of a man swimming, carried him up just far enough to reach a ledge by which he hauled himself to a firm position. It was as difficult a bit of scrambling as I have seen accomplished. We now worked to the right, to the arête by which the ascent was completed in two hours from the foot of the peak. FitzGerald, who followed us at an interval of an hour and a half, ascended by the arête all the way. The ordinary and lazy route from the foot of the peak traverses the whole width of the mountain to the left and thus reaches the high southwest shoulder, whence an easy ridge leads to the top. That was the way we came down.

The view that surrounded us, as we sat by the stone man on the top, was superb. It is well known to be one of the finest views in the Southern Alps. The Piedmontese plain spread abroad at our feet incredibly soft and faintly varied in tone. The wave of cloud still poured over the passes of the Apennines to melt into haze beyond them. Silver ribbons of river wound through the violet flat. A few strips of cumulus cloud voyaged lazily in the sky. Near at hand were the verdant valleys and hills, green on the south, bare on their northern slopes. From Argentera to Viso, the higher mountains encircled with a bold outline the richly-coloured valley area at our feet. We remained for an hour drinking in the beauty of the scene.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Coolidge informs me that he was wrong in supposing (A.J. xv. 330) that Mr. John Ball climbed this peak. He only crossed the Colle della Bicocca on July 28, 1860. The first recorded ascent of the peak was, I believe, that of Mr. Coolidge.

The descent would, as a rule, be easy enough, but the mass of winter snow caused difficulties of its own. One steep and treacherous slope had to be descended straight down. It was not long but it seemed perilously unstable and I was glad to be off it. In an hour from the top we were lying again by our baggage on a bed of gentians. FitzGerald joined us in due time, and all started on together. Casteldelfino was visible far, far below. We did not trouble about the widely zigzagging path, but struck a straight line down the hill. The grass-slopes were so smooth and steep that all we had to do was to set our feet firmly together and shoot down. Karbir raced his little round cap, which rolled like a wheel on its own account. A path presently caught us, and led to a grassy arête dotted with trees and shrubs, a very garden for flowers—rich especially in an orchis, which was in full blossom amongst large anemones (*Alpina* and *Narcissiflora*). Nothing is lovelier, and few things are rarer, than a steep wooded grass-arête. Down we went—first on one side, then the other, then along its crest—with a twinkling change of views, this way and that, inexpressibly charming. It was like the Bari Rung. Thus we struck the top of a groove, down which logs of wood are thrown for quicker passage to the valley. Its floor was slippery with old pine needles; trees arched it over; its edges were embroidered with flowers. We shot ourselves down this straight descent to within a few hundred feet of the river. A bridge led across to the village of Posterle, whence we reached Casteldelfino in about an hour from the pass. With utter lack of foresight, I drank a litre of cold milk at once. Before long I was in a fever, and it was late the following day before I could quit my bed. Thus we pay for follies, but they may be worth the price.

June 9 and 10.

Throughout the 9th I lay in bed at Casteldelfino, in a dirty little room, but tended by kind folks. At evening I was well again. Next day writing had to be

done, gendarmes to be pacified, and the dog Boulanger to be played with. Out of pure curiosity the minor officials in the place bothered us about papers and with other questions, as we were bothered nowhere else. 'Those soldiers you have with you,' they asked, 'surely they are French soldiers from Tunisia? We never heard of Nepal; where is it? Tunisia we know—it is full of dark-skinned men.' With the silly subtlety of unintelligent suspicion they sent round to the hotel inquiring whether we did not pay our bills with French money! After a while they declared themselves satisfied, and spoke me pleasantly. They returned all our papers except one, which they seemed anxious to keep. Presently some Jack-in-office saw Zurbriggen sitting before the hotel, writing in his diary, and was for ordering him to cease. This was too much. Zurbriggen hurried off to the office in a towering rage. 'I am an Italian guide, my papers are in order. I will write what I please, and, if you bother me, I will write to your chief at Turin this minute. Name of a dog! And that paper that you are keeping. Give it back now or I will make it hot for you all. You have no rights over us.' This address, I understand, produced an immediate change of manner. Apologies were tendered, papers returned, and no further annoyance was attempted. Meanwhile Boulanger ran joyously to and fro between the baker's and the inn, taking *soldi* and returning with rolls of bread. He followed us for a walk in the afternoon, and we found him to be a beast of infinite intelligence, a stone-dog like Indian Pristi. Fix a copper in a crack of a telegraph post, he would leap five feet for it and fetch it down; put it under a stone, he would haul it out; bury it in the ground, he would dig it up. Show him two coppers and fling them into deep grass, he would hunt till he found both. He was a little shaky about a third. But stones were his great joy, and the larger the better. He would gambol after them, howl round them if they were too big for his strength of neck and jaw,

and carry them about for any distance with all Pristi's airs and graces. In one feat he surpassed his Indian contemporary; he could pick the right stone out of running water and would almost drown himself to get it.

June 11.<sup>1</sup>

At last we started for Monte Viso from dirty Casteldelfino. It was at 6.30 on as fine a morning as one might wish to see. A strong north-west wind was carrying a few blankets of mist high aloft. It seemed set and the weather must hold with it. We despatched all the luggage we could spare and started, lightly laden, up a delightful mule-path. Reaching Castello in an hour we turned up the Vallante valley. An hour brought us to the Ajaut alp, where there were cows and fresh scalded milk on which we breakfasted royally.

Thus far a native accompanied us, a man with an adamant face whose expression never changed and was of the foolishly thoughtful type, proper to the White Knight in *Alice Through the Looking-glass*. He was the sort of man of whom you might hope to make a religious enthusiast. Once let him think he understood some mystery and he would go to the stake for his belief. He spoke to us in a detached manner, as from another world. 'You come from far to climb our mountains,

<sup>1</sup> Monte Viso. Left Casteldelfino at 6.30 A.M. One hour to Castello. One hour up Vallante valley to Ajaut alp. Turned north-east and made for depression left of rock between foot of Viso and Punta Michelis. One hour to upper limit of trees: one hour to edge of winter snow. Bore round left, past three lakes, leaving the last (Lago Forciolline) on our right. Continued bearing left till the hut appeared ahead, straight below a church-like rock on the Viso arête. Reached the hut in four and a half hours from Casteldelfino. Next day started at 4.15 A.M. Crossed snow to foot of south-west face of Monte Viso. Bore up face, first to right, then back to left, and then straight up, striking the south arête near the top. Ascent three and a quarter hours. Descent by same route half-way down; then bore west into a large couloir and straight down it and snow-slope below to the hut, one and a half hours from the top. Started again at 11 A.M. Descended, and then re-ascended to the Sagnette pass in half an hour. Went east down a couloir to undulating ground deep in snow. Passed Lago Grande and Lago Costagrande; got over east into a desolate valley running north-east and followed it, bearing left, and so reached Crissolo in about three hours from the hut.

even from England they tell me. It is very strange. Monte Viso is not like these hills. There is no grass on it. Oh! it is very big. Easy, you say; well, perhaps; it is not my affair. You will sleep in the hut. There is no wood there. You must take wood. You know that, I dare say. Well! good-day. A successful climb to you. My way lies up the valley and I shall never see you again.'

From Ajaut we bore up the hillside to the north-east. There was a sharp rock-peak in front, standing between the foot of the Viso and the Punta Michelis. We made for the col to the left of it, plodding steadily up a hillside diversified with broken rocks and ancient knotty trees. Squirrels played on the stones. A cuckoo called from a distant tree. A wood-pigeon quitted her nest close over our heads, and we took one fresh egg in tribute from her. Karbir climbed for it with the bag on his back and became delightfully tangled in the branches so that Zurbriggen laughed with delight.

In an hour we reached the upper edge of the tree level and paused to gather wood. Pleasant it was to see Karbir make for himself a monstrous fagot, tie it on behind his former load and then go merrily upwards as though with a mere bag of feathers.

The wind continued to rise. The increasing clouds hurried overhead and began to cling about the higher peaks. We were not destined to suffer from heat. Large rocks kept tumbling down a gully on the far side of our valley and then bounded splendidly over the débris-fan below. Another hour brought us easily to the edge of the winter snow, where we sat down to put on our *pattis*, whilst the unfortunate ones, who had no *pattis*, adjusted their gaiters. We came to a little frozen lake, then to a second, and, round a corner, to a third, larger than the others and with a name of its own, the Lago Forciolline. We circled above it, along the northern slopes, with a precipice rising on our left hand. Still circling with the valley curve, we lost all view of verdant lands and

wooded hills. Clouds roofed out the sky, wind howled amongst the rocks ; there was nought to see but sheer desolation, with forms not large enough to be grand, not graceful enough for beauty.

At length, when the whole corner was turned, the hut came in sight, near above. Behind were the toothed pinnacles of the Viso's south arête, with one church-like rock, standing in a gap, straight over the hut. At 1.15 (after four and a half hours' walking from the inn) we stood at the door. The key was with us and all that remained to be done was to cut away the hard blue mass of ice that blocked the threshold. We hacked and hacked, urged to extra vigour by the cold wind that ran through us. When the obstruction gave way, we entered the strong haven. A fire was lit, and the smoky chimney cured by an adjustment of the cowl. Coffee and food rewarded us and we entered on a lazy afternoon. The rattling of hail on the roof showed how good it was to be indoors. All were merry and sang such odd snatches of song as we remembered. Sleep followed, and the hours passed swiftly, with writing for my employment and snoring for the rest. We shivered, when it occurred to us to do so, for the highest temperature we could generate in the immediate neighbourhood of the stove was only 41° Fahr.

As the afternoon advanced Aymonod began to display his powers as *chef*. He had little enough to exercise them on, for the resources of Casteldelfino are small. He compounded a soup out of butter, salt, bread, and cheese : a combination that turned out unexpectedly well. As the pots were boiling, the men, one after another, burnt their fingers with the lids, to every one else's indescribable amusement. Thus the day rolled away. The sky cleared, the wind dropped, and a clear night came on.

June 12.

It cannot be said that we slept well in the Viso hut. I had a vivid and uncanny dream that I was a Mahatma and wandered over the earth, leaving my

material body in the cloak-room of a railway station. I called for it in due season but it could not be found.

‘Come in,’ said the man, ‘and hunt for it yourself.’

I found various packages and amongst them a coffin neatly done up in waterproof stuff with a green label.

‘Perhaps my body’s in there,’ I said.

‘Oh no!’ was the reply, ‘they never make up merchandise in that form hereabouts. Besides, that contains the body of the man who owns these clothes,’ showing me the uniform and cocked hat of one of our Carabinieri friends!

At 4.15 A.M., on as bleak a morning as can be imagined, we left the hut; we arrived at the summit of Monte Viso in three hours and a quarter, having only halted five minutes by the way to put on the rope. We walked at first over a hard frozen snowfield to the foot of the actual pyramid of the mountain. Turning up it, we made a long zig to the east and a longer zag back to the west, then went nearly straight up the face, striking the north arête not far from the top. The mountain was in dreadful condition, deeply mantled in snow, which filled all the gullies and crested the ribs between them. Hot days and cold nights had turned much of it into ice. The drippings of its thaws over the rocks had glazed large areas with blue ice. The moment we touched the mountain, step-cutting commenced; we had to hew out every footing from bottom to top. Fortunately frost reigned, so that we were not troubled by slushy snow insecurely poised on ice; but many of the upper slopes were excessively steep and frail. A bitter wind blew from the start and only increased as the day advanced. When the mountain is in proper summer condition its whole south face is practically clear of snow, and the rocks form an easy staircase. ‘Evidently,’ said Louis Carrel, ‘Monte Viso should be like the Grivola to climb, but I have never seen a mountain in worse condition than this.’

Sky and view were fairly clear when we started, but, as the hour of sunrise approached, mists began to boil in

the head of the Sagnette valley and a pink glow pervaded them with a tender radiance. We rose higher and the mountain frontier to the west came into view. A cloud navy was sailing over it from France, preceded by a row of far-projecting rams. Eastwards, the Italian plain developed at our feet, spreading in purple softness to far-away undulations of peopled hills and, southwards, to Apennines piled high with masses of sunlit cumulus.

We were roped in two parties, and the guides took the hard work by turns. Once, when we were leading, at the steepest part near the top, and the others were not so close to us as we supposed, our rope was permitted to start a loose stone. I looked dreamily at it, as it bounded down, and was horrified to see it making straight for Carrel, who was crossing a very bad couloir. I shouted at him and he saw it. The next instant it struck him, as I supposed, on the ear. I looked to see him stunned, but he went calmly forward. As a matter of fact he raised his elbow just in time to save his head at the expense of his funny-bone.

The higher we rose, the closer the clouds gathered about us and the more the wind howled amongst the jagged rocks, as though it would tear them from the mountain side. Sooner than expected Zurbriggen turned to me and said, 'In two minutes we shall be on the top.' I climbed beside him and saw, near at hand, a mound of snow with a foot of stick and a fluttering rag standing out of its side. The high stone-man and the boxes containing the wooden Madonnas were all buried under deep winter accumulations of snow. We had just time to look down on the neighbouring minor summits before clouds hid them from us. 'Wait a few minutes,' said Zurbriggen, 'the storm may clear off at any moment, for the clouds are not thick.' But just then, snow began to fall and a colder blast to blow. We turned in our steps without a word. The snow was no moment's amusement; it set in heavily and whitened the fragments of projecting rock that helped us in the ascent. It came thicker and

thicker. Downwards we went, incredibly slowly, retracing our ruined steps, which had all to be cleaned out once more. The fresh snow on the rocks froze our fingers. Ridge succeeded gully, and gully ridge, with infinite monotony. At last we were below the worst of the storm and halted to eat a morsel. FitzGerald went forward whilst I remained behind, that Zurbriggen might smoke his pipe. When we started on we struck out another route and bore away to our right into a steep couloir, the main avalanche and falling stone vent of this part of the mountain. But there was no danger now; the grip of the frost was on everything. Below the couloir we emerged on the avalanche-fan, down which we glissaded and so reached the hut in an hour and a half's going from the summit.

We lit the fire again and took stock of our condition, flustered, battered, and chilled. Some cold cream in FitzGerald's pocket was turned into a stony lump. Our knitted gloves were as stiff as boards. Icicles hung in rattling plenty from beards and moustachios; but a hot brew of coffee set things to rights. The day was still before us. The storm raged worse and lower than ever, so no one pushed to move.

It was eleven o'clock before we started down for Crissolo. We glissaded to the flat of the valley and thence cut steps up a short icy slope to the little Sagnette Pass, whilst the wind drove heavy hail against our right cheeks till we thought our ears would pulp. In less than half an hour from the hut we were looking down from the pass, eager to see what might be on the other side. Our guides had made minute inquiries from a local guide at Casteldelfino as to the route from the hut to Crissolo. He told them of the pass and that it was easy to climb to it, 'but to descend the other side is almost impossible; there is a vertical gully there down which no man can go, and on either hand of it are walls of rock incredibly steep. You will not get down there anyway, and I advise you not to try.' We were so little

disturbed by these dismal tidings that we even packed the ropes in the sacks at the hut, not expecting any need for them. Nor were they required. A fairly gentle snow couloir, flanked by easy rocks, was the beginning and end of the terrors of the way. We tramped rapidly downwards and a glissade carried us to a soft snow-slope.

The storm dropped behind as we descended. The Italian plain emerged, a faint vision, through a veil of falling snow; in another moment it was a clear actuality, shining in sunlight, with its lines and dots of trees, its straight ruled roads, its glittering rivers, encircled by far away hills and masses of cloud, domed and bright above, flat and purple-shadowed beneath. We pounded over wastes and slopes of soft snow and broken rock, through a region of utter desolation, where the cloud-capped crags of Viso keep watch over the frozen and snow-covered Lago Grande. Passing the end of the lake, we mounted to a second col. There was another frozen lake, the Lago Costagrande, beyond it, and more wilderness of snow and rock, whence bent away a wide and utterly desolate valley, bounded below by two huge ancient lateral moraines, monuments of a great glacier that once flowed down this trough.

But the storm was still upon our track. We hurried through a swampy region, then down sheep-pastures, and along a well-made path, bordered with flowers and all the gaiety of early summer. There the gale caught us again and flung hail and snow upon our backs, plastering them white. When the sun came out again each was a strange sight to the man walking behind him—for we were in fields where there was no sign of snow or tempest, save the foreground of whitened coat-back that hid for each a portion of the hot Italian plain. The path led us faithfully into the main valley and at 2.15 P.M., we entered the Gallo Inn at Crissolo, and the interviewing of gendarmes began again. After lunch, the first decent meal we had eaten for two days, we walked

to the neighbouring sanctuary of S. Chiaffredo di Crissolo, a white-washed collection of buildings, finely situated, like most Alpine sanctuaries. The frescoes outside the church and the votive pictures within are miserably bad, but they served to fill up some vacant time and they led us to a fine point of view for Monte Viso. Our peak, now that it was rid of us, had shaken itself almost free of clouds. Its summit was often clear, and only a tearing mist whirled about its upper rocks or was dragged through their teeth. The gale evidently continued to blow with unabated fury; we no longer cared whether it raged or not. As we sat in the sun and looked aloft at the scene of our morning struggles we found it almost impossible to believe that less than twelve hours before we were standing together on the highest tip of that savage, remote, repellent-looking tower.

*June 13.*

A spirit of loitering and leisure was upon us all the day. We did not start till 10 o'clock, and then our way was up so easy a path that we felt it would be out of harmony with the situation to do more than stroll. The head of the police awaited us at the edge of the village with politest salutations. A few hundred yards further on we were overtaken by a breathless local guide who brought the village shoemaker with him to take stock of Zurbriggen's boots, the like of which he desired to obtain. The fact is that Zurbriggen is one of the best equipped of guides. Whatever you want, his pockets always contain, and yet they are not over-stuffed like his employer's. A good craftsman himself, he knows good work, and all his apparatus is practical and strong.

Advancing up the Tossiet valley with its ample grass-slopes, waving up to hills of moderate height, on which only a little snow lingered, we passed numerous peasants busied about their affairs. They greeted us with pleasant salutations. It was not merely 'good-day!' but 'we wish you an enjoyable walk and fine weather,' or

something even more elaborate. One man, driving an unwilling heifer, was followed by a mewling idiot boy, buttoned up the back into his clothes. He jauped and whooped like an animal, and was as hard to pass as a frightened goat.

After leaving a village or two behind and twisting leftwards into one or more side valleys with clear streams, we began zigzagging up the hillside, where little carpets of pansy-families diversified the sward. The Viso behind was buried in clouds; further off the Argentera showed clear under the soft, heavily misted sky. We sat down whenever we felt inclined and lazily consumed the hours in perfect satisfaction. At 1.30 we came to the Colle delle Porte, a notch in the grass ridge, from which a couloir, still full of snow, dropped northwards to a stony plateau, itself cut off by a steep rock wall from the round basin of the Uverti alp below.

Northwards the view was of singular beauty. The hills to the left stretched their arms down, one beyond another, to the plain. A tender haze enveloped everything. The plain vanished into it; the higher mountains were hidden by it; and all the green ridges, leading from one to the other, were seen through it in every grade of soft evanescence. The Gurkhas expressed surprise. They were expecting to behold the great alps. 'Why,' they said, 'are there no more mountains then,—only this great maidan?'

We sat for a long time on the pass, where nature has provided excellent arm-chairs and shelters from every wind. The descent was as easy as could be. A soft path outcropped below the first snow-slope and led to the highest unoccupied alp. We ought here to have bent round and rather upwards to the left, if we intended to follow out our plan and reach Bobbio. But we concluded to let our plans adapt themselves to a descent straight down the valley, whose beauties attracted us. Like most valleys of corresponding altitude, it passed through successive grades of scenery. The bare upper

basin led to wide grassy slopes, whence we plunged into a beautiful gorge where solemn, purple, slabby cliffs and towers of rock on the one side were faced by nut-grown and flowery slopes on the other. The descent into this gorge was made by a twisting staircase, overshadowed by young green foliage with waters trickling in all directions. Here we reached some considerable crystalline slate quarries, actively worked. Huge thin slabs of stone, suitable for pavements, were being brought down slides in a fashion amusing to watch. The rear of the slab rested on the ground, whilst the front edge was upon a thing like a sledge with two short shafts. A man held the shafts and ran down before the stone, which he could raise more or less off the ground by pressing on the shafts, wherewith he also guided the mass. When the stone was going and the man running so close before it, with a dust-cloud flying about him, loose stones tumbling around and the earth grating and trembling with the jolts, it looked as though he must be overwhelmed and smashed by the brute lump behind him. But Zurbriggen assured me he was safe. 'They bring down stones like that in my valley. It is easy enough. If the rear of the stone did not rest on the ground it would be difficult. The thing would then go *wie's Donnerwetter* and the man would be *kaput* at once. But as it is, he holds the shafts and does what he pleases with the stone, and it is quite helpless. I have often done it myself.'

Trucks, drawn by three or four mules, awaited the stones at the foot of the shoot. We followed the ratty road made for them, Zurbriggen walking with me and discoursing learnedly upon horse-shoes, of which in his capacities of diligence-driver and afterwards of blacksmith, he had plenty of experience. Diligence-owners, he said, contracted with the smiths at so much a year. 'Is that the best plan for the owners or for the smiths?' I asked. 'In my time it was best for the owners, for that was before the railway was made between Sion and Brieg, and I drove the coach on the road there. All the heavy merchandise which now goes by train had to be

carted along the road, so the road was cut up and could not be kept even, and shoes always wanted looking to. The railways in Switzerland, by carrying the heavy loads, have made the roads so good as you see. Before the railways, roads had to be bad.'

Every half-mile brought us into more fertile regions. Chestnuts shaded the way. We came to Osterie overgrown with vines. To appreciate the plains you must descend from the snow; to enjoy the snows you must climb from the plains to them. Repeated interchange between desert and sown enhances the attractions of both, just as the sky looks bluest when the eye is turned to it from an orange sunset.

Often we sat down in pleasant places, for the mere joy of feeling their luxuriance,

'Where the huge-pine and poplar silver-lined  
With branches interlaced have made  
A hospitable shade,  
And where by curving bank and hollow bay,  
The tremulous waters work their silent way.'<sup>1</sup>

About six o'clock, or perhaps five or seven, we reached the mouth of the valley, dipped to the river Pellice, and crossed it to the new railway town, where every bed was already engaged for military occupation. Whilst we were discussing what was to be done, an Englishman came up and offered his services. He proved to be the head of the Salvation Army in Italy. By his advice we sent our men to Torre Pellice, a mile off, and ourselves went to tea at his house. We found him a most intelligent and alert person, full of experience of men and places, broad-minded, eager, intensely interested in the body with which he was connected, and apparently an efficient manager of men. I engaged him in talk for about two hours and then he conducted us to an excellent inn at Torre Pellice, lent us an English newspaper, the first we had seen for a fortnight, and left us to an excellent night's rest after a good dinner.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Stephen de Vere after Horace, but some arboreal changes are needed to make the description fit the Luserna valley.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WESTERN GRAIANS<sup>1</sup>

June 14-17.

It would hardly interest the reader to know how we went from Torre Pellice to Modane; there are various routes, leading through hilly though hardly mountainous country, and we took one of them, in bad weather. We had to go to Modane to send Zurbriggen home, show our passports and the Gurkhas' to the police, submit our intended route for approval, get ourselves cross-examined once for all, and thus as far as possible minimise the frontier nuisance. We found the officials most polite. They asked what treatment we had received in Italy. I described to them how the Gurkhas had been mistaken for Tunisian natives, and trusted that in France they would not be taken for Abyssinians from Massowah! My friend protested volubly against such a possibility, and in his cloud of words I went a-dreaming, merely agreeing with him from time to time.

'*Alors,*' he said, '*nous sommes des ânes.*'

'Quite true!' I replied vaguely! Down came Fitz-Gerald's heel, hobnailed, on my slippered foot and I perceived that I must have blundered. The official repeated his remark severely; I replied appropriately, and the matter passed. He recommended us not to take photographs nor to mark our maps. 'If any one interferes with you, refer him to me.'

In the evening we found a café with good beer on

<sup>1</sup> It would have been more consistent with the main idea of our journey to have gone by the Eastern Graians, the mountains of Cogne, but I knew that district already.

draught—a heaven-sent gift. When I went to sleep, FitzGerald was sitting on his bed, pen in hand, immersed in mathematics. ‘Let  $n$  be the number of glasses we drank—no!  $2n$ , for it was an even number. Then you had  $2n-1$  glasses and I had  $2n+1$ . Now we played  $2x+4$  games of dominoes, of which I won  $x$  and you the rest,’ etc., I went to sleep dreaming of  $xs$  and  $ns$ , tangled up in equations, inextricably confused. On awaking next day the first thing FitzGerald said was: ‘It’s all right; you ought to have paid for three glasses. It’s quite clear—look here. We drank  $2n$  glasses between us. . . .’ I agreed with him immediately, and that matter passed also, but only for a time. At lunch he began again, ‘I don’t understand about those glasses of beer after all!’ and even that was not the last recrudescence of the calculation.

We took the two o’clock diligence from Modane along the right bank of the valley as far as Avrieux. Three horses abreast, collared with hissing bells,<sup>1</sup> dragged us slowly along. Near Avrieux we entered a splendid basin of the hills, deep hollowed, where the river winds beautifully, and the Esseillon fort stands on a broad eminence over against the Cascade de St. Benoît, which leaps down in three separate stages. There was a wonderful effect of breadth about this view, reminding me of Pennell’s remarkable drawing of Le Puy en Velay.

At Avrieux we expected to find our men, but they were gone up to Aussois, so we had to follow them with the baggage. We toted most of it ourselves, but hired a fellow to carry the *pièce de resistance*, a well-filled bolster bag. The man was a Spaniard by race, and three parts drunk. He ran the first ten minutes and became hopelessly out of breath—but he was choke-full of chatter and brag, and the words fairly jostled one another in his mouth with the wind of his puffing and blowing. ‘I’m not accustomed to carrying,’ he said, ‘that’s why I puff.

<sup>1</sup> Small bells hiss and do not jingle as any one can discover by hissing beside them.

—These straps cut my shoulders. But I have travelled—everywhere—in the Mont Cenis direction and to Susa and away to Pralognan and everywhere. What for? why, for my pleasure of course. I travel all over the mountains. Once I was attacked by two bears, over Pralognan way. I showed them my sword-stick and they soon found themselves running. But I have killed bears; rather! I should think so. Why, once in the Tarentaise there was a bear-hunt and all the huntsmen had guns, but they were afraid. Then I said, “This is what I will do. I will lie down in my cloak with my sword beside me like a dead man, and the bear will come to me.” So I lay down on my face and the bear came and sniffed me all over and turned away, and as he turned I smote him in the belly and he cried out and ran, and I shouted to my comrade, “Comrade! look for the bear down your way, for I have mortally wounded him,” but he ran off in fear. The cries of the dying bear brought another bear to see what was the matter and I slew him also, for I have great courage. The huntsmen came up and asked, “Who killed these bears?” so I came forward and said, “I did,” and showed them my bloody sword: all the men knew that it was I who killed them and the prize was given to me, the bouquet of flowers that is the bear-killer’s trophy.’

As we approached Aussois he called attention to its deserted look. ‘All the folk,’ he said, ‘go down-hill for their holiday, but it is never gay here as it is at Modane.’ The deserted aspect of the place, as we soon discovered, was due to the fact that the whole population was gathered at the door of the inn, wonderingly flattening their noses against the windows to catch a glimpse of the Gurkhas. ‘Two minutes after we arrived,’ said Aymonod, ‘fifty people came pressing around us. It was hot, I can tell you. They are simple folk here, I think. They have good pastures, but they don’t seem to know much.’

The landlord of the inn gave us the key of his high chalet, and we immediately started for it, walking quickly

up hill in the cool and cloudy afternoon, and reaching the place in two hours. We halted by a herd of cows and had one milked into our water-bottle. Karbir went merrily forward, talking volubly to himself. He made up his mind from afar off which our chalet was to be and led straight to it. The key fitted its door and in we went. On our way, we saw the Dent Parrachée and our col beside it. 'There,' said I to Aymonod, 'is our pass.'

'Perhaps,' he answered.

'And that is the Dent Parrachée.'

'Part of it perhaps; we shall see; the peak may be behind.'

'That's what he always says,' remarked FitzGerald. 'He never will admit that a peak is in sight till he is on the top of it. It's a way he has.'

The chalet turned out a great success. It was admirably clean, furnished plentifully with wood and all needful utensils; in fact, it was far more comfortable than most inns hereabout. Our dinner was quickly in preparation and we turned in early, though with fears for the morrow, as the evening closed with rain.

*June 18.<sup>1</sup>*

We were called at three o'clock to as ugly looking a morning as our worst enemy need have wished us. There were soft high clouds and soft low mists. A little rain was falling and all the hills were hidden. By five o'clock, when we finally settled to start, things looked a little better. At any rate there was a north wind, and that is supposed to bring fine weather. A lark was singing with all its heart just above our chalet and the sky became clear in patches. A few yards from the door we encountered snow, and soon the ground was white, save where broken rocks thrust themselves through. Fitz-

<sup>1</sup> Dôme de Chasseforêt. Left Plan Sec chalet at 5 A.M. Two and a half hours to the Col de l'Arpont. Crossed the Glacier de la Dent Parrachée below the séracs, and, bearing left, mounted snow-slopes to the top of the Chasseforêt in three and a half hours from the col. Descended névé and right side of Glacier du Pelvoz and the valley below in two hours to huts at the mouth of the Rocheure glen.

Gerald was in no better spirits than myself, and gave utterance to what many mountaineers have said or thought in the early hours of morning—‘Why didn’t I know when I was well off at home, and stay there?’ We plodded up towards the col, sinking into the snow at every step. Part of the Dauphiny *massif* showed for a time in a chilly and unimpressive manner through the clouds, but all distant views were soon covered. The final scramble was up a steep snow couloir, which landed us on our col (Col de l’Arpont) in two and a half hours from the chalet. The Dent Parrachée was now immediately on our right hand and we might have walked straight up its south-west arête and descended to Termignon, but that was not our way. Opposite were the ridge and Dôme de l’Arpont, and the Dôme de Chasseforêt. We determined to climb the latter and gave ourselves two hours to reach its summit.

We actually took three hours and a half. Nothing was ever more tantalising. There was only a great basin of snow to be descended into and crossed and some snow-slopes to be climbed, but within them were deep white bays which the even light failed to reveal. Further away we saw for a moment the Grande Casse and the Grande Motte, but they were soon wrapt in clouds. Down into the basin we went; the snow was soft and powdery as though newly fallen. We traversed immediately below some threatening snow-séracs, whose white faces were fringed with great icicles. Then began our three hours pound up snow-slopes and amongst schrunds running in all directions. Clouds were everywhere, except between us and the sun, which shone with uninterrupted persistence. It did so because Karbir had left his dark glasses behind and there was a good chance of snow-blinding him. The peak maintained its distance and we had given up all hope of approaching it when we found it close at hand. Its top was covered with wind-blown snow, frozen into horizontal blades and filaments.

We halted for form’s sake for nearly fifteen minutes,

though there was nothing to see, before resuming our onward march down the *névé* of the Pelvoz glacier. Nothing could be drearier or less interesting than our surroundings till we were brought up short at the edge of a huge ice-cliff, where the glacier breaks away and falls over a bar of rock. We had to walk along the edge of the break to the south till we came to a very steep snow-slope where for a wonder the snow was good. We wished it had been worse, as we might have slid on the back of a small avalanche. As it was, we had to pound down to a slushy flat and over it to rocks and water. Whilst lunching we discussed the probabilities of a thunder-storm and agreed that one might be expected. 'Perhaps it won't come,' said Aymonod, 'for I am lucky with thunder-storms. I have only once been in a bad one on the mountains, and that was high up on the Matterhorn, at the ropes. To make matters worse, the gentleman with me was nearly blind. A stone had just struck him in the eye and he had lost half his blood. He begged us to leave him behind. Fortunately he was a little fellow weighing only fifty-two or fifty-three kilos, so we got him down all right, but that was a dreadful storm.'

The descent from the peak to a chalet at the mouth of the Rocheure glen took us only two hours of walking, or rather of bumping; we were glad to halt there. The place was dirty and its owner foul, but there was milk to be had and hay to lie on, so we made shift to be content. The owner had a funny old woman for servant. She inspected us closely. 'Any one,' she said, 'can see you all come from one village, for you don't talk our language and I can't understand a word you say to one another. All the world, of course, understands French, but your *patois* and mine are only known to our own folks.'

We drank immense quantities of milk, twenty litres in all, amongst us before we left the place. 'Milk,' said the old woman, 'is good. It has four children, cream, cheese, *sérac*, and pigs.' Thereupon she waxed autobiographical

and pathetic. 'I have brought up fifteen children and now I am left alone and must work for my living, old as I am. In ten years I shall be dead. But some of my children are doing well—there is my daughter married in Canada, where, she tells me, they talk English, and I have a son in Paris and others elsewhere. But I am all alone. It is sad to be an old widow left to earn her bread.' We made a mess of bread and milk which she watched carefully. 'That is good soup for you,' she said, 'besides you won't break your teeth on it.' But what she admired most of all was our rope. 'If you want to hang yourselves,' she said, 'there you are! That won't break and let you down, and if it is always with you you can use it at any moment. How much a kilo does it cost?' The *patron* took Aymonod round to see the estate, and especially directed his attention to a little stone-built shrine by the door. It contained a small carved triptych with the Virgin appearing to SS. Peter and Dominic in the midst and SS. Nicholas and Margaret on the wings; why he should have those saints in particular he did not seem to know. Some one pays attention to the place, for there was a quantity of withering violets spread out before the triptych—perhaps the old woman's offering. By six o'clock we had exhausted all the sights, so we turned in amongst the hay, leaving rain and clouds to do their worst.

June 19.

There was no talk of an early start this morning for rain fell in torrents and the wind howled through the many chinks of our refuge. But at seven o'clock matters began to improve, and by eight we were ready to go forth. The sun was shining through a bright haze and manifesting the fresh snow on all the grass-slopes around. We marched over wet grass. Now and then the wind caught us and blew us out of our tracks. Crossing a bridge we entered the Vallon de la Laisse and advanced up its left bank. It is a desolate valley. The grass

gave way to mere débris of broken stones, nasty to tread on. Over against us was the south face of the long ridge, connecting the Grande Casse with the Grande Motte. It should have been by this time of year a bare rock-wall, but it was a plain snow-face, crested above with a great cornice. The snow reached down to the top of the débris slopes, which were piled at intervals with avalanche-fans. It was useless to think of climbing this way to the ridge as our intention had been. Up the valley therefore we went to grass again and round a corner northwards to the Plan de Nette, a snow-covered mud-flat, over which we slopped and splashed. More utter desolation and dreariness than now surrounded us cannot be imagined. There was not a blade of grass in sight. Clouds roofed us in at a low level and hid all far-seeing peaks. We toiled up a snow-slope, past the foot of the Grande Motte's east arête. Round the corner a striking bit of ice-fall loomed out of the mist. On the upper plateau there was a white area flatter than usual, marking the position of a frozen pool. We passed it, and, misinterpreting the map which seemed to indicate a col to the east leading to Val d'Isère, bore up to the right, higher and higher, over snow-slopes and on to a glacier, which gradually forced us round to the north and down to the head of the Vallon du Paquier. We reached our highest point, on the flank of the Rochers de Génepy, in about four hours from the chalet. All thought of climbing the Grande Motte had long been given up. We wanted to get off the snow as soon as possible. It was horrible stuff to pound through, white and fine as flour, and deep, so that we sank in it to the knee and often, for yards together, to the thigh.

When the downward valley opened before us we saw that we should quit the snow most readily by descending the middle line, instead of bearing round to the right as instinct told us we ought. At length we crossed the lowest considerable patch, shook the white powder from our boots, and sat down to lunch about two o'clock.

We were near the top of a precipice over which the stream leaps. The hill-side was on our left; on our right was a mound of rock, rising in the midst of the valley; the precipice stretched from the one to the other. Various attempts were made to find a way down this precipice, with the result that Carrel and I worked to the right, the others to the left. The precipice trended upwards their way and they had to mount above it for a long distance before finding a practicable gully. We ultimately climbed round behind the rock-mound and joined the path, by which we soon returned downwards and came in full view of the face of the precipice. It is a splendid wall of rock and plunges vertically, with water shooting over it. There was a flat green meadow below and huge purple masses of fallen rock half-buried in it, just where light and shadow met, for the sun was shining again and the hills were emerging from the clouds. Mont Pourri stood up to the left and the Aiguille de la Grande Sassi re to the right, blanched from base to summit. Proceeding leisurely along the good path, we met the others who had scrambled down an exciting little couloir.

A pleasant walk brought us about four o'clock to the borders of the charming Tignes lake, where there were chalets and cows by the water's edge. 'Why,' I said, 'should we not pitch our tent here and stop for the night? The men can sleep in the chalet and we shall be far better off than down below.' The idea was immediately approved. We sent Aymonod and Amar Sing forthwith to Tignes for provisions. Karbir set up the tent. We had milk to drink and were delighted to find ourselves in so lovely a place. As the sun went behind a hill, shadows crossed the turquoise lake and lifted the emerald mantle from one low headland after another. Ample grass-slopes descended on one side. On the other stood a bolder mountain front, whose silver-grey substance was riven into countless gullies, sharp cut in light and shadow. Right in front rose the white peak of

the Grande Sassièrè from a bed of cloud. Cows came to drink at the lake, and merry goats, prancing and butting in pairs. A laden mule toiled along the path. The sun was still bright on the chalets beyond the lake, and island cloud-shadows drifted over the broad hillside. The water became calm towards sunset and the snow-mountain cleared as its crest turned to gold. A soft air played over the lake and bore towards us the lowing of the kine, the clang of their bells, and the ceaseless song of water falling far away.

*June 20.*

The sun rising over Sassièrè's crest smote upon our little tent and roused us to the clear morning. We opened our doors, turned up our walls, and lay as under a large umbrella, watching Nature awaken. The mountain before us was a grey silhouette against the bright eastern sky, with a soft band of mist drawn all across it, whose top edge turned to molten silver in the glance of the sun. Flashing points of light shot from the rippled lake, and dew-diamonds sparkled on the grass. As the sun ascended, mists rose from the valley and dissolved away. The grass dried and the lake grew calmer, so that the Sassièrè, barred across with faint ripple lines, lay on its surface. The low grassy shore was yellow in the morning light, save where rocks, cropping out, cast blue shadows. Cow-bells were ringing all around and the cowherd sang some melody of Oriental weirdness. Touches of light caught the edges of the rock-face, which looked like tarnished silver in the shadows.

Long we reclined upon the grass after our early breakfast, delighting in the day. We watched the cows come down again to drink, and then feed up to us, so near that we could hear their deep breath pouring over the ground as they tore the grass, and the occasional thud and swish of their fly-pursuing tails. Karbir, sitting by me, tried to tempt one cow up to him with a large dandelion. He was full of talk about the mountains and the snow. I endeavoured to explain to him that the

glaciers are like rivers and that if he sat for twenty years on one it would carry him down to its foot. I had to eke out my scanty Hindustani with all manner of gestures, for gesture is the language of inarticulate persons and races, not of the truly eloquent. Floods of words and waving of arms are not required by a master of language.

At nine o'clock, when we started for Tignes, the day seemed half done. The path carried us along the western shore of the lake, and down a meadow valley. At the edge of the trees was a waterfall, like a broad white veil spread over a convex rock. Soon afterwards the fine cascade behind Tignes came in view. The bad weather, the late season, and melting of the snows had at all events this advantage that we saw every waterfall in full perfection. The Sassièrè and other snowy peaks sank out of sight, as we descended, but the charming Isère valley opened before us with the picturesque village in its midst.

The path to Tignes by no means descends into the lap of luxury. I doubt whether all the Alps hold a fouler inn than the *Grand Hôtel des Touristes chez Réviel Florentin*. Cows are stalled in the kitchen and common dining-room on the ground floor. There is not a chair in the house. There is nowhere one clean square inch. No cheese-maker's chalet that ever I entered compared for filth with this loathsome den. And the food is equal to the accommodation: sour bread, rancid butter, deformed and dirty knives and forks, meat of undiscoverable sort and peculiar aroma, and a chicken, the like of which I only saw once before, when the ancient rooster of a village in the Lepontines was sacrificed for me and, being cooked, turned out a semi-transparent mass of muscle, from which even an ice-axe rebounded in dismay.

As we were approaching the village we saw a building like a hotel, and sent the guides to inspect it. Aymonod, it should be observed, is the most cautious of

men. He never smuggles an ounce of tobacco from Switzerland into his Valtournanche. Carrel has less foresight and a more slap-dash way with him, so that, if there is tobacco in Carrel's bag, it is upon Aymonod that the gendarmes are sure to pounce. He looks guilty enough for two, moving in an apologetic manner that awakens the suspicions of all authorities. Such being the nature of the two men, the effect upon Aymonod of all the cross-examinations by carabinieri and the like folk, to which he had of late been subjected, is easily imaginable. His papers were all in order, whilst Carrel had none; yet Aymonod was suspected. As they approached the building to which I have referred, Aymonod, going first, peered round a corner and saw—gendarmes! 'Filons!' said he to Carrel, and off they fled, Carrel lagging behind and looking back. 'Stop!' shouted the gendarmes. Carrel stopped, Aymonod hurried forward as though not hearing. The action was suspicious and they were of course overhauled and examined.

'But,' we said to Aymonod, 'why did you run?'

'It is the natural instinct of man to run from gendarmes.'

'Your papers are all in order, are they not?'

'Doubtless, but papers are worthless. I showed them and they said they were rubbish!'

Having deposited our men at Tignes, we walked up to Val d'Isère to try whether its inn might not be preferable. It was preferable in every way; a more charming little retreat I have seldom found in the Alps. The inn-keeper received such early visitors with enthusiasm. 'You are English,' he said, 'you know Mr. Coolidge. He has been here often. He came with Mr. Gardiner and the two Almers. He is coming again. See, here is a letter from him, and a guide-book he sent me for my English visitors, *Climbers' Guide to the Mountains of Cogne*. He is going to make a guide-book for our mountains also. We have had English people staying here for some time. Last year we had a gentleman from the great English Museum in London

—see! this is his name!—you know him? He liked my hotel very much. He was with another gentleman. They used not to climb the big mountains; but what legs! They would go out for a long walk before breakfast, and for another afterwards. You don't like the inn at Tignes. Tell that to Mr. Coolidge; he will laugh like this—he! he! he! He has been here three times. The first time he came and found my new inn, he said “Good! very good! *continuez!*” When he was not climbing he would go out into the woods with his guides and write up his notes. He is very careful with his notes, I think.’ And so on for ten minutes, whilst an excellent breakfast was in preparation. We had to inspect the lace, made in the winter-time by the waitress, simple and cheap, considering the infinity of knots that go to a mètre. ‘You see,’ she said, ‘we have long winters here—seven months or more, and nothing to do but make knots. It is slow work, but it fills the time and one can earn something. This piece was a month’s work. It is broad and long—but this you can have cheaper, for it is more open and not so hard to make.’

In the cool of the afternoon we strolled towards Tignes. We passed half-an-hour, trying to lodge stones on a rock in the midst of the torrent and then knock them off again. Thus we arrived at the level, where the road turns a corner before zigzagging down into the Tignes basin. The evening was coming on and the view was superb. Far away northwards, down the valley, were snowy mountains drowned in a lemon sky. The green flat of Tignes was at our feet, with the bright river winding through it in loops, like a very Jhelam. Hills rolled up on either side to craggy steeps, and the whitened mass of Mont Pourri presided over all. We halted long to enjoy the pleasure of the scene—a picture ready-made, requiring no artist’s selective eye. An hour later we were back in the vile inn, refusing our food, and hastening to bed for oblivion.

*June 21.*

Our one idea in the morning was to get away from Tignes, to shake the filth, and memory of it, from us at the first possible moment. We started therefore to take our breakfast at Val d'Isère leaving the men to follow after their midday meal. In proportion to our disgust with the filth we left behind were the charms of the place to which we returned. The greetings of the inn-keeper and his girl were pleasant in our ears, and the breakfast they prepared for us was praiseworthy.

In due course our men arrived, overshadowed by the lowerings of a coming storm. We took their advice and decided not to sleep out, but to await the developments of the skies and be guided by them as to the morrow's plans. A lazy afternoon came upon us as an unusual pleasure and passed all too quickly.

*June 22.<sup>1</sup>*

When we started at 2 A.M. from hospitable Val d'Isère, the weather showed every favourable sign. The night was cold. A slight wind blew from the north. The moon shone in a clear sky. Traversing a meadow path, each saw the shadow of his own head surrounded by a bright white nimbus, such as caused Benvenuto Cellini so much satisfaction and confirmed that clever blackguard in the belief that he was under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin! Half-an-hour's walk down the valley led to a waterfall under the road. It is remarkable for coming straight out of the mountain side in a considerable volume. We turned up

<sup>1</sup> Aiguille de la Grande Sassièrè. Left Val d'Isère at 2 A.M. Walked down the valley-road for half an hour to a waterfall. Turned up its right bank. Bore left and wound into the Sassièrè valley. In two hours turned left, a little below the lake, and ascended towards the south-east arête of the Sassièrè. Three-quarters of an hour up grass; one hour up an easy gully; twenty minutes up snow to the arête. Turned along the arête, keeping first south of the cornice, then along the crest, and finally up steep rocks in four hours to the top. Descent in one hour to Col de la Sassièrè. Three-quarters of an hour down Gliairetta névé to right moraine; one hour along right bank to a grassy knoll; two hours to Fornet by valley-path.

beside it, passed a little village, Franchet, and swept away leftwards across the mountain side, just as the lights of moon and dawn were mingling. On rounding into the Sassièrè valley graceful Tsanteleina stood before us with the morning star glittering on its crest. A wide turf flat, an ancient lake basin, with chalets in it, afforded delightful walking, whilst the broad face of the Sassièrè looked down upon us and offered a choice of many possible routes to its summit. At that time the mass of snow reduced us to the necessity of climbing one or other of its arêtes. If we had known enough we should have turned immediately up to the easy west ridge and climbed along that; but our baggage restrained us. We wished to leave it at the foot; so we made for the south-east arête, by which under any circumstances we must descend.

In two hours from Val d'Isère we were close to the lovely Lac de la Sassièrè, whose position corresponds closely with that of the Tignes lake or the Lac de S. Grat, hereafter to be mentioned. Before reaching it we turned to the left and began climbing the Aiguille de la Grande Sassièrè. Tsanteleina, as we rose, displayed its beauties so attractively that for a moment we hesitated whether we should not make it our choice. From the circle of its lap a pure white glacier poured forth in a fair cascade. Three-quarters of an hour up slopes of grass brought us to the rocks of one of the Sassièrè's buttresses; we halted to breakfast and enjoy the grandly developing view, wherein the Écrins and other Dauphiny peaks began to appear. An hour of easy scrambling by gully and rib and twenty minutes up a slope of hard snow, in which steps had to be sliced, landed us on our arête,<sup>1</sup> where Mont Blanc, the Grand Combin, the Matterhorn, and Monte Rosa saluted

<sup>1</sup> The point where we actually struck the arête is the dip on the extreme left of the view of the Grande Sassièrè from the Gliaietta glacier, illustrating Sig. G. Bobba's valuable paper on the *Valgrisanche* in the *Bollettino* of the Italian Alpine Club, No. 57.

us in cloudless glory. The Gurkhas were all agog to see the Matterhorn, for they knew of it from their comrade Parbir, who went three years before with Bruce to Zermatt; and they had seen Donkin's big photograph of the mountain in London. They wanted also to see Switzerland and to be told whereabouts was Zurbriggen's *gom*. They could not have received a more glorious revelation of the Central Alps than what now appeared, and they expressed their delight with enthusiasm. Aymonod, who has a pretty taste in views and is always finding analogies between one view and another, enjoyed their satisfaction. 'When I heard,' he said, 'that I was to travel with two Indians, I did not know what to expect. I feared they would be savages. But these men are charming to travel with, they are so friendly and intelligent. They are quite civilised men.'

Southwards we overlooked the mountains through which we had come. They turned white faces towards us and again reminded me of rows of waves on a stormy sea, washing away and breaking towards the sun. The ridge, from this point to the peak, was heavily corniced along almost its whole length, so we had to keep well on the south face. The snow was hard, involving continuous step-cutting, which climbing irons would have avoided. We roped in two parties and Aymonod led. He told me of the advice tendered to him by a man, calling himself a guide, at Val d'Isère. 'If you climb the Grande Sassiére,' said this wiseacre, 'be sure not to tie yourselves together with a rope! tie your employers and hold the end of the rope yourselves, you can then let go in case of a slip and not all be destroyed together, as happened on Mont Blanc. *N'oubliez pas; n'attachez vous pas à la corde! ne faites pas de ces bêtises!*'

When Aymonod had cut many steps, Carrel began to lead his party ahead, but this Karbir would in no wise permit. Some days past he had been for taking a more

active part in the work and now he hurried forward and began vigorous step-cutting. The guides were pleased with his zeal and energy. 'He has a good pace,' they said, 'and he cuts well and easily. Of such men good guides come. They want to learn, and that is a great thing. They will confer a benefit on their country. We for our part will gladly teach them all we can.'

We advanced steadily in the best of spirits. At last I was coming into condition! FitzGerald's superfluity of breath found vent in song or rather snatches of songs, in all languages. 'Thus,' said Aymonod, 'one climbs without being bored, when there is somebody to sing by the way!' At the foot of the final peak was a bit of sharp arête from which the cornice had fallen. We walked along the actual crest, cutting flat saucers to stand in. The heat of the sun was already softening the snow on the steepening slopes. Scoops of it started rolling down on either side, gathered substance about them, and became wheels, which, rotating too rapidly for their cohesion, burst into fragments, the hubs of other wheels, doomed to a similar fate.

Fifty mètres or so below the top we were brought to an unexpected halt by a wall of rock masked in rotten snow. It looked rather risky. We would try it, however, before giving up. Patience and care surmounted the obstacle and carried us to the summit, after about four hours work on the arête. We could not linger there, for every moment the sun shone on those last fifty mètres the difficulty of descending them increased. The superb panorama was clear, save for a faint line of cloud hanging over the French lowlands. We stood in the very heart of the Graians and, though Dauphiny, the Viso, and, I believe, the culminating group of the Maritimes were in sight, the main area of the view was occupied by the Graian mountains and northwards by Mont Blanc and the Swiss giants.

In descending the ticklish place, the Gurkhas went carefully and attended to their neighbours on the rope,

after the manner of experienced guides. There was no floundering in their tread. They left the frail steps uninjured behind them. Their bit of rope never hitched over angles of rock nor sagged for lack of care. We tramped through deep and easy snow to our baggage on the ridge in three-quarters of an hour, and there we made a long halt with all the glories of the hills about us and the turquoise Sassi re lake at our feet. The Tignes lake was also visible and a tiny spot of light at its edge was the sunlit wall of the chalet by which we had pitched our tent.

The pleasures of the day were ended and now the toils began, for the snow was soft as slush and we must wade it. Following the ridge to the saddle called Col de la Sassi re, we turned away from the frontier line, and entered Italy once more. We floundered across the n v  of the Gliairetta glacier, avoiding many hidden crevasses and striking off to the right above the great ice-fall. Thus, in an hour, we reached the crest of the right lateral moraine, which was still buried waist-deep in wet snow. Discomforts multiplied upon us for another three-quarters of an hour—discomforts which would not be experienced later in the season. The snow masked the stones so that treading was at random. Many times we slipped into deep holes, but we forged ahead so fast that the momentum of the party hauled out the fallen. Below the moraine came a long hill-side traverse over steep slaty slabs, wet with snow dribblings, which loosened the flaky d bris that alone afforded foothold. Steep and swampy grass followed, alternating with beds of wet snow, but we reached dry land and halted at last to unrope and enjoy a superb view of ice-fall and s racs, deeply thatched with winter snow. There was nothing before us but a two hours' tramp along a foot-path down the right bank of the Valgrisanche to the hamlet of Fornet; so we lay on the grass in solid content finishing our provisions, discussing experiences and plans, and some, I dare say, sleeping, whilst the shadows crept towards the valley bed and the day grew cool.

A Val d'Aostan proverb says 'the way into Val-grisanche lies neither over land nor sea but over rocks and stones.' When we went forward we found this to be true, but the path was good and by five o'clock we were exploring the village of Fornet for the inn we expected to find, but of which we could discover no trace. We were directed to an unpromising chalet whence a small scared man came forth at our summons.

'Yes,' he said, 'faith, this is an inn, such as it is, and I am the host. Food, too, you can have, but you have come too soon. I am making provision for travellers. I have bought boxes of sardines, and good bread and all things—tins of meat and what you please—but they are not here. They have not come up the valley yet. You can have chickens to-night, but *immediately* you say, and there's the difficulty. Well, come in! immediately, you can have eggs and wine, and butter and hard bread. That is all.'

We entered a foul enough looking passage and passed through cavernous places strong with the stench of cows, then through a sort of lumber room. It was most unpromising, but a brand new door opposite gave entrance to a clean room, of which half was walled off with red cotton curtains, whilst beyond it were two little rooms, scrupulously clean, though filled with ancient air. 'Here,' said our rather troubled host, 'are the rooms for travellers. There was before only one big room, but I have cut it up as you can see. All the wood is new. I keep the windows shut when no one is here. That is why it smells of wood; but it will soon be fresh. From year to year I do what I can to improve the place. One used to have to bend down like this to enter the doorway; it was so low. And the windows were low—down to this bottom pane of glass; but now I have made a fine door and these large (2 × 4ft.) windows. A captain once came here and said to me, 'You must make an inn,' and an Englishman came (Mr. Coolidge) and I put him up and gave him all I had to eat—black bread and sour

wine—and he told me to make an inn. So I bought this house and the Italian Alpine Club gave me a hundred francs to prepare these rooms for strangers, and so I began, and from year to year I get on a little. It is not much of an inn, I know, but what do you expect? It is the only inn there is in all Valgrisanche. Down at Grisanche-the-Church there is a place where you can get a drink of wine, but no beds. You must sleep at the priest's.'

The old fellow was a character and amused us with his talk. Mr. Coolidge tells me that he once found him with a Bernese Almanack solemnly setting his clock by the hour of the rising of the sun given therein! Perhaps that was the time when, the establishment being out of white bread, some was sent for to Aosta. Before it arrived bad weather drove Mr. Coolidge away, but the precious commodity was carefully preserved, and next year when Mr. Coolidge returned the dried loaves were triumphantly produced for his consumption. Our host related to us how he fought in the Italian wars and won two medals, with which he and his stout family have been photographed, as he failed not to show us. 'A man came here to take photographs of the mountains (for, you know, our mountains are beautiful) and he said to me, "I will take you too." So I said, "agreed," for it did not cost much. Here it is. I call it the picture of the Royal Family.' We asked him about our further way over the Ruitor and so forth. He was not anxious to get rid of us. 'It is no use your going to sleep at any chalet for the Ruitor; there are no chalets more than an hour's walk away in that direction. There is the chapel by S. Grat lake, but no chalet—only the chapel, besides, that is not the proper way up the Ruitor. I have been up and I know. You can't go that way.' An hour or two later he came back and admitted that there was a refuge somewhere in the neighbourhood where we wished to encamp. 'Yes, that is true, and it is a good hut where you will find wood and all you want, but the

key is down at Valgrisanche. I don't know whether they will let you have it. You are English. Is England at peace with Italy? That is the question. It is? Well then I think they may let you have it. You can at all events send down and ask. Now you must drink my wine. It is good wine. I bought one hundred litres of it for travellers only. I keep the bung sealed all the winter so that no one may get at it, but now I have broken the seal for you. And my cheese too, you had better try that, for it is good; it is last year's Fontine.' Truth to say, both wine and cheese were excellent. Aymonod is not to be imposed upon with indifferent foods and drinks. He pronounced the wine to be S. Pierre of Aosta and a good vintage. He is a connoisseur in such matters, for he is well off and travels as a guide for his pleasure, having no need of money. He is a man of property, relatively as rich in the Valtournanche as a millionaire in London. 'It will be pleasant,' he said, 'to climb the Ruitor, for I can see it from my estate, not exactly from my house, but from a part of *ma propriété*. I have therefore often looked at it and that makes me glad that we are going to climb it.'

We spent most of the following day, the 23d, at Fornet writing up journals, letters, and the like, whilst our men busied themselves in various ways. The Gurkhas, with their Oriental instincts, spread our things in the sun for a bath. They procured grease for our boots and one of them came in to grease the leather band on FitzGerald's axe. Seeing that FitzGerald asked Aymonod to have this done, some elaborate gesture language must have gone on outside in the interval. We had reason to be satisfied with our quarters. The rough accommodation was good of its kind, incomparably superior to that of the Tignes inn, which remains for me the zero in the scale of hotel-dom. Before we left, the host brought me an eagle's plume, which he suggested would look well in my hat! He had not shot it himself, he said, but picked it up near the village, where the bird died in the winter.

In reply to our note, sent to Valgrisanche asking for the key, there arrived Captain Mazza (4th Alpini) commanding the troops in the valley, and with him the surgeon in charge. As they were ushered in, our host wildly dragged me into a corner and whispered, 'I have excellent Asti!' Our visitors explained that they had been expecting us for a fortnight and had been ordered to do anything they could for us. If we would come down to their headquarters we should share their comforts and supplies, but, as they supposed we were bent upon climbing next day, they had brought one of their men, who would conduct us to the military refuge above S. Grat, where we might spend the night. They remained with us for an hour or more. We talked about their work, their mountain expeditions, the equipment of their men, the kind of climbing they are able to do, and the length of time they can remain victualled at high altitudes. When the guides informed me it was time to start we bade our visitors farewell with the friendliest feelings.

There was nothing of special interest in our march up the S. Grat valley till we came to the wild waterfall, in a dark little gorge, by which the lake empties itself. We climbed to the top of it and stood beside the locked-up and windowless chapel on the shore of the frozen lake, with the cirque of the Ruitor's cliffs rising beyond it, apparently precipitous. Evening was drawing in, but unfortunately we could see no refuge. The soldier had been chosen because he could speak English. This was his first visit to S. Grat, so he was as doubtful where to look for the hut as we. He started off to search, climbing the crest of the Bec de l'Ane's east arête. We watched him going upwards for an hour, whilst a cold wind howled about us. Becoming hopeless, we dug a platform for the tent and collected such bits of wood as the chapel builders had left about. The situation was cheerless in the chilly, windy evening—a fitting home for such dragons and fiends as mountain-chapels were

built to restrain. At the north foot of the Ruitor glacier there is a similar chapel, suitably dedicated to S. Margaret, the dragon-destroyer. 'But what,' I asked of pious Aymonod, 'had S. Grat to do with dragons?' 'I don't know,' he replied; 'S. Grat was bishop of Aosta in about the fourth century. He was a great bishop and he succeeded a very bad man. He was a traveller and went to Greece and, I dare say, to Jerusalem. He found and brought to Aosta a part of the head of S. John Baptist, my patron saint, whose fête day is to-morrow. That is our belief. You see him in pictures, dressed as a bishop, with a mitre on his head, a crozier in his hand, and sometimes holding the head of S. John; but what he did with dragons I don't know.'

Just as the dragon of cold was upon us, S. Grat himself intervened and directed our soldier to the refuge. He shouted to us from far aloft and we turned to ascend. We mounted some 800 feet and reached the hut as night was coming on. It was half buried in snow. The outer door was frozen up. When it yielded to our efforts, we entered beneath the sheltering roof. We found a stove, wood, a lantern, plenty of straw, and a saucepan. There were piles of drifted snow upon the floor and everything was damp. With difficulty we lit a fire, which would only burn when the door stood open, so that the wind could enter by it instead of down the chimney. Our simple tasks occupied us long and it was eleven o'clock before we could turn in.

*June 24.<sup>1</sup>*

By 2.30 A.M. we were roped and ready to start. The

<sup>1</sup> Col de S. Grat (c. 3350 m. 11000 ft.). At 2.30 A.M. left a hut west of, and about 300 feet above, the S. Grat chapel. Traversed north and crossed the foot of the Glacier de la Sacherie. Mounted diagonally over rocks and came in three-quarters of an hour to the foot (level with the valley's third step) of the last coloir to the left, leading up towards the Becca du Lac (3335 m.). Climbed a snow-slope and the coloir for one hour to rocks, and then bore right, up snow and over rocks, for three-quarters of an hour to the watershed, close to the summit of the Becca du Lac. Descended the Ruitor glacier for two hours, quitted it for its right bank above pool, and reached the catane in forty minutes. Followed a path for one hour to the big waterfall. Half an hour to La Joux. One hour to La Thuille.

warm wind was still howling; clouds buried all the mountains; mists drifted about in S. Grat's cauldron. The snow-slope at the door of the hut was as soft as when the sunshine left it. Never did day open less promisingly. But we were determined to reach La Thuille somehow and we hoped to cross the col ahead before the threatening storm broke.

Traversing horizontally to the north, we reached and crossed the little Glacier de la Sachère and so gained the rocks at the south-east foot of the Becca del Lago. We stumbled up their inclined and slippery faces, where finely flaked *débris* made just enough friction to hold a boot on the smooth slabs. The weather grew continually worse. Away to our right a series of cliffs descended in three steps, with snow-slopes between, from the south lip of the Ruitor glacier to the lake. In three-quarters of an hour from the hut we were level with the third step and the dawn was breaking. As we turned to the west up a snow-slope leading to a couloir, streaks of pink struck here and there through the clouds, and patched the wide landscape with colour, touching one or two snowy summits. To our surprise, the clouds began to dissolve and the mists to rise. Distant ridges developed, and a circle of blue sky opened overhead. But the strong west wind still swathed the Ruitor's crest in cloud. The snow-slopes up which we toiled were of a soft substance, covered with a crust that broke beneath our feet. The snow in the couloir was as bad, but we forged ahead to gain the broader, gentler slope above, before stones fell. At the top of it, on a jutting rock, the breakfast halt was made. We began to have hopes of the weather. The Gran Paradiso, a transparent grey silhouette with beautifully jagged outline, stood between us and the eastern horizon; further round the Sassiére was coming into view. We were in a noble situation, from which, however, a falling stone dislodged us, for the snow-slopes on either hand were scored with the tracks of such, and this might be the advanced guard of others soon to be

loosened. Up, therefore we struck again to the rocks and over them into viewless mists and snow. In three quarters of an hour the slope grew level under our feet and the ascent was done.

From the ridge (Col de S. Grat) joining us to the Tête du Ruitor eastward, we knew that the great Ruitor névé stretched down in gentle undulations to the north. We could not see it, nor indeed could we see anything except a small area of flat rippled snow-field, losing itself in all directions in the delicate sparkling mist, through which the circle of the soaring sun was faintly discerned. With compass and map we determined the direction to be followed, and down we went over admirably firm snow. Seldom have I been in lovelier surroundings than those afforded by the rippled névé and the glittering mist. The air was soft. A perfect silence reigned. Nothing in sight had aspect of solidity; we seemed to be in a world of gossamer and fairy webs. Presently there came an indescribable movement and flickering above us, as though our bright chaos were taking form. Vague and changeful shapes trembled into view and disappeared. Low flowing light bands striped the white floor. Wisps of mist danced and eddied around. At last, to our bewildered delight, there spread before us in one long range the whole mass of Mont Blanc and the Grandes Jorasses, a vision of sparkling beauty beheld through a faint veil, which imperceptibly dissolved and disappeared. I halted to gaze on the wondrous panorama, thus astonishingly revealed. Assuredly nowhere else is Mont Blanc better seen than from this Ruitor névé. No foreground more admirably serves to set off its blue shadowing buttresses and cream-coloured domes than the flat white area of this magnificent snow-field. Accompanied by such a celestial vision we descended the pleasant slopes of unsoftened snow, till, in less than two hours from our arrival on the pass, we reached some flat, glacier-polished rocks by the right bank of the glacier, where we halted to breakfast again and unrope. Long we lay in

the sunshine, drinking in delight, before continuing our descent by the bank. We passed some beautiful pools reflecting sunny peaks, the Pointe du Petit and the Pointe du Grand, and so came to a smaller and a larger lake and a new-built climber's *cabane* whence a good path led forwards.

A grey hare racing from us delighted the Gurkhas, who set up a warning shout as though all the avalanches were let loose. We descended successive terraces of rocks, the mule path meandering picturesquely along shelves commanding dizzy prospects. Immediately below us was a lake, blue in the midst but ringed around with a muddy deposit upon its rocky bed, like the eye of some recumbent monster watchful of the skies. In fact, we passed through a succession of lovely scenes; for the Rutor glacier was once much larger than now and ended in a thousand feet or more of ice-fall tumbling from ledge to ledge down the face we were descending. The rocks therefore are all glacier-worn and the ledges are grassy; the way lies from one meadow shelf to another, down this valley of ledge-paths and lakes.

An hour below the *cabane*, as I was following some zigzags, I noticed a path turn off to the left and at the end of it a cloud of spray. The air was full of the sound of many waters. Turning along the path I came in a minute or two, round a corner, to a bridge spanning a pool into which a cascade was hurled from above and whence it plunged to the depths below. Coming on it thus suddenly the effect was overpowering. The torrent, bearing in full flood all the melting of the Rutor snows, was flung down towards me from the sun. The lashed waters, dark against the light above, and so buried in spray that between air and water was no sharp division, seemed to be tumbling like solid masses hitherward. Their evident weight was the impressive thing about them. They looked ponderous, solid, and black, and the wet air around was heavy and thick, in the solemn cleft of the hills. Facing about, Mont Blanc was before me,



GRANDES JORASSES FROM THE ALLÉE BLANCHI



and the smiling valley, and at my feet the water, now white beneath the sun, leapt in one joyous plunge straight into the midst of a gay rainbow. Returning to the zig-zags I sent the men to see this grand cascade, whilst I sat by the baggage. They returned delighted; and we all went together to the lower gorge and other cascades and so to the flat of the valley. A picturesquely wandering path, amongst woods and broken slopes, brought us to La Joux at noon, whence a road led in about an hour to La Thuille on the Little S. Bernard road.

There too we were expected and kindly received by Captain Raffa of the 4th Alpine Regiment, who had news of our approach telegraphed by watchful carabinieri. Signore Darbelley, President of the Aosta section of the Italian Alpine Club, also came to call on us, and with these gentlemen we spent a pleasant hour before abandoning ourselves to an afternoon siesta.

## CHAPTER V

### MONT BLANC<sup>1</sup>

June 25.

AFTER a quiet, though not an idle morning at La Thuille, for there was much writing to be done, we were fairly ready to set forth again on our travels. We sent the men away early and ourselves followed to Courmayeur. After so much walking, to drive was a pleasure, change being an essential element in the charm of travel. The weather was again uncertain. A high haze overcast the sky, far above the summits of all the peaks, like the haze that hung over Nanga Parbat, but unparalleled in my Alpine experience. Fluffy grey cloudlets crawled lazily over selected points and ridges of rock. Only in the valleys did the air seem to be stirring and there but idly and without set purpose of getting anywhere. The heat was unusual and penetrated the haze without diminution of power. In fact there was a threat of atmospheric disturbance displayed in every form. Carrel, however, was not to be moved from an attitude of persistent optimism. 'To-morrow,' he said, 'may be fine

<sup>1</sup> Mont Blanc. Left Courmayeur at 8 A.M. 2 hours to La Visaille; three-quarters of an hour to Combal Lake; one hour and three-quarters up right moraine of Miage glacier and middle of glacier to clear ice; fifty minutes to foot of Aig. Grise; a quarter of an hour to old shelter under rock; one hour and a quarter to Dôme hut above right bank of Dôme glacier. Total, six and three-quarter hours walking. Next day started at 2.10 A.M. A quarter of an hour across snow-slopes to névé of Dôme glacier; three hours to *bergschrand*; a quarter of an hour to arête; three-quarters of an hour to narrow place; one hour and a quarter to col by Dôme du Goûter; twenty minutes to Vallot hut; two and a half hours to summit; half an hour down to Vallot hut; one hour and three-quarters to Gr. Mulets hut; one hour to unroping; ten minutes to Pierre à l'échelle; ten minutes to Pierre Pointue; two hours to Chamonix. Total: ascent from hut, eight hours, twenty minutes; descent to Chamonix, five hours and a quarter.

enough, and the weather of to-morrow will last a week, for to-morrow the moon enters a new quarter.' Whence came this inveterate belief in the effect of the moon's phases upon weather?

We enjoyed the great glory of the little S. Bernard pass—the magical view of Géant and Jorasses, which bursts upon the traveller as he emerges from the tunnel above Pré-S.-Didier. There we caught up with our men, and thenceforward it was a race between us. They cut off zigzags, whilst our quaint nag lazily followed them, halting dead every now and then to bite at the flies on his flanks. We arrived all together at the well-known Hôtel Royal at Courmayeur, and found that the place had been opened that very morning and that we were the first visitors of the season.

There is no pleasanter situation to while away a few hours than in a deck-chair on the balcony of this hotel, facing the impressive view of the Col and Aiguille du Géant. It seemed only the other day that I was there, looking through a telescope and discussing with a friend the possibility of climbing the Aiguille. We were just agreeing on the improbability of success when I cried out, 'But there are some men on the top now! they are raising a signal.' It was the moment of Signori Sella's famous success (1882). Now the Géant has lost its mystery. It is hung with a cable from top to bottom, so that the veriest tiro may swarm up it in an hour. Thus does the glory of a peak pass away. All the dragons are driven from the Alps and maiden tourists sport in their dens.

*June 26.*

It was eight o'clock on as bright a morning as one could desire, when we left Courmayeur to cross Mont Blanc to Chamonix. The day, indeed, promised to be too hot and we regretted not being earlier a-foot. Neither Aymonod nor Carrel had ever reached the summit of the mountain in their lives, though both were turned back by bad weather more than once. 'It is curious,' said Aymonod, 'but no

one ever asks me whether I have done the Matterhorn or any other peak. It is always Mont Blanc, and I have to say No! It is most annoying. I told Carrel yesterday that if some traveller did not take me to the top I would myself hire a man to accompany me and do the mountain before retiring from the axe. He only laughed and said I must be mad, but I meant it. I should be ashamed to give up guiding without having climbed Mont Blanc.'

There was some talk at Courmayeur of our getting Emile Rey to go with us, considering the earliness of the season and the fact that none of us knew the route.

'Did you see Rey?' I asked.

'No!' answered Aymonod, 'for he does not live in Courmayeur: I hear he is engaged to take a priest up the Matterhorn in a few days. It is the same priest who said Mass on the summit of Mont Blanc.'

'That is a new kind of first ascent,'<sup>1</sup> remarked some one. 'We have had first ascents by ladies, first ascents without guides, first ascents by blind men, and now I suppose we are to have a series of first ascents with Mass on the summit.'

'Well!' replied Aymonod, 'I don't see anything improper in that, for Holy Scripture tells us that God has always specially manifested Himself amongst the mountains. It was in the mountains that the Law was given. Many of the great miracles were wrought in the mountains, and Christ Himself was crucified a little way up-hill. Perhaps it is fitting, therefore, that mountaineering should take its turn to be blessed.'

We walked leisurely through a pine wood, whose trees framed the loveliest glimpses of the Géant and Grandes Jorasses. The path mounted steadily. Unusual heat caused a high mist to form, wherein the peaks became hourly fainter and less substantial, till rock and sky

<sup>1</sup> Not really so new as we thought, for Mass was said long ago on the summit of the Rochemelon, Monte Viso, and other peaks.

partook of the same transparency. Round a corner, the stone-covered foot of the Miage glacier appeared, filling all the breadth of the valley and with some splintered rocky points standing beyond it. The resemblance to the foot of the Baltoro glacier was striking, though the greatly reduced scale was equally apparent.

In two hours from Courmayeur we halted for lunch at the cantine of La Visaille. The old lady who keeps it greeted us with enthusiasm. 'You,' she said, 'are the first-comers of the season, and can have what you need. My things are all fresh; they have only just come up. Pray enter, for the day is hot.' She wished us luck when we went forward through the flowery meadow beyond her place. There was a little wood above it, at the edge of which two cowherds, man and woman, were noisily fighting with stout sticks. Neither attempted to ward off the other's blows but only to get in his own. Their heads were hard, and the whacks resounded from their pates. The hills echoed them and the full-toned abuse with which they were accompanied. Presently both had enough. They withdrew to a safe distance, continuing the wordy duel, in which the woman easily had the better over her less voluble foe. Meanwhile the cattle grazed quietly around, and their bells clanged musically amongst the trees.

The path led up the old Miage moraine, where young trees are now growing upon it beside the stream that drains the Combal lake. It is a pretty winding path and brought us, all too soon, to the lake's margin and the open ground above. Here we bore to the right, over grass, and came again to the foot of the glacier's existing moraine, where it sweeps round in a noble curve out of the deep Miage valley. We climbed to the crest and entered on the stone-covered ice at a moundy and disagreeable place, which again recalled the Baltoro glacier, both to the Ghurkas and to me. The resemblance ceased with the mounds, beyond which the stones on the glacier, being for the most part of a slaty nature,

mixed here and there with crystal-dotted rocks whereon the sun sparkled, lay level like a well-made pavement, pleasant to travel over. The troubles of mountaineering seldom last long and intervals of ease are frequent. Each difficulty has to be tackled and surmounted in turn and serves as contrast to what may follow. Thus, distributed through a day, they resemble the troubles and difficulties whereby life is relieved from the boredom of unbroken peace. Only when the long day's work is done, in the tired evening, does featureless repose possess its perfect charm.

Two hours above La Visaille we halted for a second lunch in the midst of the gently sloping glacier. As we faced down it, the spotty pyramid of Mont Favre (which we ought to have crossed) was before us, the couloired slopes of Trélatête on our right hand, and the crags of Brouillard on our left. Looking up towards the Col de Miage we identified the ice-cascades whereby the snows that fall on the south-west slopes of Mont Blanc empty their three fine glaciers into the Miage basin. Nearest to us was the Mont Blanc glacier, which falls from the crest between the Bosses du Dromadaire and Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. Next, and separated from it by the buttress called Rocher du Mont Blanc, was the Dôme glacier. Last came the Italian Bionnassay glacier, whose sides are the Aiguilles Grises and the ridge joining the Aiguille de Bionnassay to the Col de Miage.<sup>1</sup>

To save another halt we put on our *pattis* and gaiters before starting. 'It's a good thing that there is no one here to see us,' said Aymonod, 'they would take us for so many Tartarins.' We were not really so 'previous' as

<sup>1</sup> There is some confusion about the nomenclature of the ridges here. There are two main routes to the summit of Mont Blanc from the Miage glacier, (a) the route by the Sella hut on the Rocher du Mont Blanc and the Mont Blanc glacier, and (b) the route by the Dôme hut on the Aiguille Grise, the Dôme du Goûter and the Bosses. Climbers usually confuse the Rocher du Mont Blanc with the Aiguille Grise, and talk of the 'ascent by the Aiguille Grise' when they mean route a.

he supposed, for in half an hour we came to the clear ice and five minutes later we were wading soft snow, through which impeded streams of water soaked their disagreeable way. Three-quarters of an hour are often gone like a moment, but when they are spent in wading icy slush they seem an eternity. We welcomed a crevassed bit of glacier, though it too was so deeply snow-covered that the bridges were disguised. Beyond, we gained the left bank of the glacier, and mounted it, traversing eastwards over slopes of avalanche snow, down which things of all sorts fell. One wet little avalanche came our way but did no harm. Later in the season we should have followed a footpath; but now it was only higher up, as we turned over the ridge into the basin of the Dôme glacier, that the path emerged from its winter covering. Here we found an overhanging rock and a built-up sheltering wall of dry stones, the old sleeping-place, now abandoned for the admirable Italian Club-hut which comes into view almost at this point. The rough path continued for a while, leading to a snow-slope and a couloir, both swept at this season by little avalanches; but the afternoon shadow was already over them and only one or two stones fell. We entered the door of the hut without adventure in less than seven hours of easy walking from Courmayeur.

This hut is the best I have seen outside Tirol. It is built wholly of wood, draughtlessly jointed together. Doors, shutters, and windows fit. The furniture and implements are strong and sufficient. The fire draws, and the chimney does not smoke. The place is superbly situated. Over against it, and higher up, the Sella hut was in view on the Rocher du M. Blanc, half buried in snow. There was plenty of snow around us too. Carrel pointed out where, the year before, when he was with Mr. Whymper, they pitched their tent on a flat platform. It was now a steep snow-slope across which we had to cut a way. Then, he said, the traverse to the plateau of the Dôme glacier lay almost entirely over

rocks; now it would involve continuous steps, and we sent him and Amar Sing to make them while the snow was soft. They tied on a long rope, the end of which Amar Sing wound *Orientially* about his turban, instead of over his shoulder as a Swiss guide would have done.

Meanwhile Aymonod, putting off the guide, became cook. A fire was lit with the logs Karbir carried up, and to which he had added from the glacier an ancient alpen-stock<sup>1</sup> of stout wood that burnt well. In a hut Karbir is the best of men. He is never idle for a moment. There is no need to set him to work; he finds what has to be done with an unfailing instinct. He hunted out an axe and began cutting up wood at once. He lit the fire, fetched snow in pans and put it to melt, keeping the cauldron filled with a soup-ladle. He unpacked our things and gave each what he at the moment was on the point of wanting. Between whiles he kept sweeping the floor so that the snow brought in on boots had no time to melt. Then he washed every pot, pan, cup, knife, or spoon we might be going to use; put away each thing as it was done with; stirred up the straw for our beds; and all the time kept the fire burning and lent a hand to the cook when it was needed. I have never seen a more alert intelligence. Aymonod also distinguished himself. He brought up the meat raw on this occasion, and with some of it he made soup whilst he turned the remainder into what he described as 'something between cutlets and beefsteaks.'

While these things were doing and the evening was drawing on, I sat outside the little hut and studied its wonderful and interesting surroundings. Northward the upper basin of the Dôme glacier was admirably displayed in all its steep descent to the fine ice-fall plunging from our feet. I traced the many variations of route by which

<sup>1</sup> It had a curved top and was marked 'H.' 'Luzern, Alpnacht, Brünig, Meiringen, Brienz, Bönigen, Interlaken, Grindelwald, Heimwehfluh, Abendberg, Kl. Scheideck, Wengernalp, Faulhorn'—a very pretty tour, but how did a *marked* bâton come high up on the glacier de Miage? It is not a place often visited by ordinary tourists.

this so slowly elaborated ascent has been made. First Mr. E. N. Buxton's party in 1865 descended by the eastern branch of the Dôme glacier and the rocks dividing it from the western branch. Then, in 1891, Herr O. Zsigismondy climbed partly up the western branch, then by the dividing rocks, and then by the séracs and slopes of the eastern branch. But the way taken the previous year by Signori Ratti, Grasselli, and Bonin in their descent, which was entirely down the western branch was better than either, and is now the standard route which we followed. For a moment I debated whether we should not strike up a new and shorter line. In the furthest corner of the glacier is a wall of rocks descending from about half-way between the summit of the Dôme du Goûter and the Bosses. The foot of this could obviously have been reached and the rocks as obviously climbed, at that time, without danger from falling stones, for the deep gullies were full of firm snow. But I wanted to ascend by the regular way, which has never been described in English, so I make a present of the new plan to the climbing public.

If our chief interest lay to the north, south-eastward, down the glacier, was the direction of beauty. On the one side the crags of the Rocher du Mont Blanc were bathed in warm light; on the other the riven wall of Trélatête was merged in shadow and only the snow-crest above flashed back the radiance of the lowering sun. The stone-covered floor of the glacier lay dark in gloom, but a band of light still touched the Combal Lake. Favre's pyramid divided the distance, wherein the Ruitor's snows were prominent and white Sassiére's point rose above the clouds. Presently mountains and clouds were alike bathed in pink which in its turn faded away. Finest of all was the view by night, when the moon crowned Trélatête with silver and touched the crest of Bionnassay's topmost ridge, but left in mysterious shadow the rock-wall opposite us and the deep valley, whilst away in the far distance faint suggestions of peaks

and snows and softest clouds, floating in light-permeated air, received from the bold foreground an intensified delicacy.

*June 27.*

By one o'clock the guides were stirring. A few minutes after two we were on our way. It took but a short quarter of an hour to follow the steps made by Carrel in the evening, which the frost had turned into a staircase as of rock. Thus we emerged upon an easy snow-slope, whilst the moon, already in its last quarter hung on the crest of the Rocher du Mont Blanc. For some distance above us the glacier was cut across by walls of ice with slopes of avalanche débris between, up which we wound to turn obstacles as they came. Step-cutting was almost continuously required, but the slopes were not steep and small chips sufficed. The dim light of future day soon rendered our lanterns useless. Greys and faint purples began to overspread the distant view; then dawn swept her rosy wing over all and the golden day appeared, full armed, on the margin of the east.

As the slopes became steeper and step-cutting more laborious and slow, there was time to look about and note the value of the regular pyramid of Mont Favre standing out before the white sweeps and scoops of more distant mountains. But the eye seldom wandered so far afield; close at hand were objects of fascinating beauty. We were passing between cavernous blue crevasses, and schrunds half-opening their icicle eye-lids to the heavens. Cold curdled névé poured down on all sides between jutting walls of splintered rock. Sometimes we mounted ruins of avalanches using the frozen balls as helpful steps. Then we came to a hard slope where the whispers of baby breezes were silenced by the crunch of Carrel's axe. On the furthest southern horizon domed clouds were rising in upward air-currents, like great plane-trees. At last only one glacier rift, though it was fifty yards wide at least and more like a



AIGUILLE DE BIONNASSAY, FROM BIONNASSAY ARête OF M. BLANC



valley than a schrund, remained to be turned, before easy snow-slopes, interrupted by two insignificant *bergschrunds*, offered kindly access to the col on the arête joining the Aiguille Grise to the Dôme du Goûter's southward ridge. After three hours of ascent up the glacier we halted for breakfast fifteen minutes below this col.

A cold wind caught us on the ridge, but at first we hardly noticed it, for we were warm with walking and the view was grand. Divinely blue was the glimpse we caught of Geneva's lake, whilst all the lower hills spread beneath a purple haze. Dauphiny, too, saluted us, and the country through which we had come—Ruitor and Sassièrre, Grand Paradis, Levanna, and Grande Casse, Monte Viso, and ranges more remote.

A comfortably broad snow arête led in a few minutes to the point of junction with that from the Aiguille de Bionnassay, whose slender edge trended gracefully away. In three-quarters of an hour we reached the narrow crest, whence, by a sudden breaking storm, Count Villanova and his guides were blown to swift destruction, so that their bodies have since remained undiscovered in the depth of the glacier below. But to-day, though the wind was cold and strong, it was not too strong for safety. Besides, truth to tell, the arête at its narrowest is not really narrow. Had we not heard of its fame we should have passed it unnoticed.

As the morning advanced the atmosphere grew more dense with vapour and more rich in hue. Flocks of tiny oval clouds grazed the green hills. The Lake of Geneva was lost beneath a purple pall. The snow sometimes gave place to ice, which delayed our advance and made step-cutting laborious, and this was especially the case when we reached the flank of the Dôme. There too the wind rose and smote us fiercely, when, in a hour and a quarter from the Col de Bionnassay, we emerged on the broad saddle by the Dôme, twenty minutes below Monsieur Vallot's huts. There are two of these, one built for the use of climbers, the other for the owner's

accommodation and observatory. Some excellent scientific work has already been accomplished here. It looks a more business-like affair than the hut on the summit of the peak, built in imitation of it by M. Jansen, and which could scarcely have been built at all but for the accommodation provided for the workmen by the Vallot hut. M. Vallot is therefore evidently within his rights when he claims to be the pioneer in the matter of Mont Blanc observatories.

We sheltered a while behind the *cabane* and quitted our baggage there, when Karbir, Aymonod, and I started to cut steps up the exposed ridge of the Bosses, leaving the others to follow at their warmth and leisure. Karbir led to the summit and did all the cutting quickly and well. We had no predecessors' tracks to abbreviate our toil. The area of the view steadily enlarged, but the amount of visible earth diminished under the cloud-flocks, which gathered themselves into beautiful lines, long drawn out, one beyond another.

It was just noon when we stood on the top, arriving there all together. The first thing we looked at was not Europe at our feet, but M. Jansen's hut—a dreadful disfigurement. The last time I was here, the surface of the snowy dome was one unbroken curve of snow, aloof from man. Now man has rooted the evidences of his activity deep into the icy mass and strewed its surface with shavings and paper, so frozen down that the storms of the whole year have not sufficed to remove them. I cannot however say that we felt any resentment against the hut-builders, for we took shelter behind the observatory from the blasts of the cold gale.

The panorama was complete and included the Pennine and Oberland ranges besides those we had already seen. It was however the clouds that fascinated us most, the flocks of little ones on the hills at our feet and the lines of soft white billows as it were breaking far away on a wide and shallow shore, with blue between and beneath them. Far to the south, creamy in sunlight

and distance, rose domed *cumuli* above the Maritimes. Everything looked still, and yet, I suppose, the wind was really hurrying along the air and whatever floated within it. The sky for a quarter of its height had parted with its azure to the valley-deeps and was striped all round with finest lines, incredibly numerous, like the lines in a wide-stretched solar spectrum, and each edging a new grade of tone.

We ran in half an hour back to the Vallot hut, picked up our things, and made off for Chamonix by the well-known way. As we dipped to the Grand Plateau, the snow began to be soft, but it never became really bad. We turned the crevasse below the Plateau by its left end, ran easily down the slope called Grandes Montées, and hurried across the Petit Plateau, where men have lost their lives and will again lose them in the ice-avalanches that from time to time tumble from the Dôme du Gouter's cliffs and sweep the whole breadth of the traversable way. The steep snow-slope of the Petites Montées was too soft to be glissaded; down it we had to wade and then find our way through the crevassed region that intervenes between it and the Grands Mulets. Here, with no tracks to guide us, we might have lost some time, but our men were skilful and fortunate, so that, in a hour and three-quarters from the Vallot hut, we reached the edge of the rocks by the well-known Grands Mulets cabane and were rejoiced to find it occupied.

But here, to our surprise, came, the worst bit of scrambling on the mountain. The foot-path to the hut was buried under a slope of ice, coated with rotten snow, and we had to cut our way to the house, a good half-hour's labour, though we took advantage of every jut of rock that could be reached. We escaped into the hut from the fury of the sun, which had for some time become overpowering, and we remained there until it lowered toward the west. The woman in charge confirmed our expectation that we had made the first ascent of the

mountain for the year 1894. A few days later I read in a Geneva Journal that a French party had made the ascent two days after us, and claimed it as the first of the year. They stated that their difficulties had been increased because they had no tracks to guide them! But as, on the very day of their ascent, I could still see our tracks on the mountain from the neighbourhood of the Flégère, their statement rested, to put it mildly, on a defective foundation.

Clouds were boiling up from the valleys, but they left Mont Blanc clear. One copper-coloured tower of mist rose before us in splendidly threatening manner and the sunlight turned lurid in its depths. The air was everywhere heavy with moisture and the Brévent ridge was so softened by it that mountains, clouds, and mist faded into one another as though fashioned of one insubstantial medium. The sun turned ghostly pale, shining through a bleared sky, and over ghostly ridges into the veiled valley below.

At last, to avoid being benighted, we started down once more, following the tracks of the porters who bring things to the hut. They were unskilfully laid out and took us into dangerous places, first down a slope of sérac débris, overhung by tottering masses of ice, and then through a series of rotten séracs and across the easy but deeply snow-covered Glacier des Bossons.

At the far side is a well-known dangerous place where ice and stones fall from the hanging glacier of the Aiguille du Midi. Carrel, who was leading, followed by FitzGerald emerged from behind a sheltering mass of rock into the gully beyond; they gave a shout and both leapt back. Crash! came a great rock accompanied by several large blocks of ice. We felt the wind of them as they flew by. Karbir jiggered with delight. 'It goes *li li li li*,' cried he. As soon as the missiles were passed we bolted across the gully and reached a place of comparative safety beyond, where we paused to unrope. We were in no mood to linger hereabouts, for the Aiguille du Midi

sweeps with stones the whole place more or less, and this was the time of year for them to come, and the hour too, after a hot day with plenty of snow melting and slipping everywhere. One or two more stones fell during the ten minutes that intervened before we reached the Pierre à l'Echelle. Below that we had several good glissades before turning away to the right by the path that led in ten minutes more to the Pierre Pointue, where our adventures ended.

The sun poured a final stream of red upon us, then sank behind a hill, whilst we zigzagged in the woods towards the valley-floor that seemed not to approach. They are lovely woods and the path is beautiful, offering every variety of foreground and frame for the changing distant views. But now our senses were becoming dulled to beauty and our minds had sunk into the heaviness of our feet. It was night when we reached the valley road. We followed it in darkness towards the lamps of Chamonix and the comfortable quarters of Couttet's Hotel.

*June 28-29.*

We spent two days at Chamonix, the first devoted to almost perfect idleness, the second to journal-writing and other virtuous occupations. To please the Gurkhas I visited the Guide Chef and procured for them certificates of their ascent of Mont Blanc—*chits* as they naturally called them. They are decorated with a picture of the mountain and are of an imposing appearance. Fitz-Gerald was unfortunately called away to Florence, so I had to face a continuance of my route for a time alone. On the second day a thunderstorm broke in the afternoon, but otherwise the fine weather continued and Mont Blanc remained clear.

## CHAPTER VI

THE BUET ; CHAMONIX TO S. MAURICE.

*June 30.*

ALL day long I was intending to leave Chamonix, but the hours went by without the intention passing into act. Indeed, when the afternoon was there, and the clouds began to gather as for a storm, I almost determined to wait over another night—to such straits of laziness does a couple of days' repose reduce a commonly active traveller.

However, at four o'clock, to the joy of my men, who were weary of inaction, I pricked the flanks of my intent. There was but a three hours' walk before us and we set forth to accomplish the task. After tramping lustily along the high road, we turned up the trippers' mule-track towards the Flégère, a well-made stoneless path, soft and pleasant to tread upon till the summer crowd digs it up. It zigzags through a dense pine forest, soothing to the spirit; and then it leads to opener places, where the trees let you look between them at the rising mountains across the valley. The hills cease to be oppressive as you rise over against them, and face them squarely. It is only from the valley-traveller that they hide their heads behind their knees, like so many Pharaoh colossi towering above *fellahin*.

Two winds were contending overhead and neutralising one another, so that the mountains on both sides reached out arms of cloud. Now and again one of these arms would break off at the shoulder and, becoming puzzled whom it belonged to, would solve the difficulty by

falling in rain and producing a bright rainbow arc. The air was full of electricity, tickling the face like cobwebs.

The owner of the Flégère inn, regarding us as certain prey, watched our approach with content, which gave place to visible disgust when we passed him with a mere greeting.

‘Where are you going to?’ he asked. ‘To the Floriaz Hut? It’s useless going there. The place is empty. There is nothing in it.’

‘We have all we need with us. Good evening!’

‘Humph. You will wish you had stopped here.’

The hut was visible high above, with a mule-path leading to it and a sign-board descanting on the merits of the way for the enticement of summer tourists to the end that they may mount and be shorn. We took our time up the open and barren alp, turning often to see the noble view, assuredly one of the very noblest in the Alps. As the sun went down, the piled clouds faded into long beds of soft grey mist, drawn across the face of the hills and perfectly still. Presently rounded masses began again to rise off the level mists and fill the sky.

The hut was as vacant as the inn-keeper had said. It consists of two little stoveless rooms large enough for the sale of drinks to a few people at a time. Two benches were its entire contents. Garret and cellar yielded nothing to our search. We accordingly unpacked our provisions and lit a fire with wood gathered by the way.

One of Aymonod’s peculiarities as a commander of provisions is that he always orders too much bread. The result was that our provision sack, by process of time, came to contain an accumulation of morsels of all dates. Carrel dragged them forth and arranged them in chronological order. They dated back to the Valgrisanche! ‘What does it matter?’ replied Aymonod, ‘one can always use up the dried crusts in soup; indeed for soup they are better than fresh bread.’ The same kind of thing tended also to happen with cheese, so that we had fragments of

several sorts from various places. Upon these Aymonod lectured, whilst Carrel interspersed comments.

‘Every one knows that in the Alps many sorts of cheese are made; but all of them are either *fromage gras* or *fromage maigre*. *Gras* cheese is made from all the milk; *maigre* cheese is made of milk from which the butter has been taken. All these are bits of *gras* cheeses. Only the poor eat *maigre*. They like it better than *gras* because they can eat more of it. When you have eaten all the *gras* cheese you can, you are still hollow; but the *maigre* fills you out and they like to feel full. You see the peasants sitting with a slice of *polenta* in one hand and a slice of cheese in the other and taking bite and bite about. They drink water and that is all that they have.’

‘Is that enough to enable them to do hard work in the fields?’

‘Certainly. It is all most of our peasants get and they are as strong as you or I.’

‘It’s enough for field work,’ interposed the cautious Carrel, guarding against any possible reduction of his guide’s ration; ‘but it would not do for the mountains—there one needs better food and wine besides. But, when I was a boy working in the fields, that is all I had, and I was a strong lad too.’

‘Go on, Aymonod, tell us more about the *gras* cheeses. Which are the best and where are they made?’

‘A great deal depends on the particular pasture and more on how the cheese is made. One man makes good cheese where another makes bad. In fact, a cheesemaker is an artist, and you know what that implies. There are prizes and competitions in our country for cheesemakers. One of the best sorts of cheese is Fontine, such as we bought at Fornet. There is a bit of that here, for I would not waste it on soup. When that is made, the milk is not left long on the fire, so it is not a hard cheese. Then there is Gruyère. The best comes from near Fribourg. Fontine is made all over the Alps and so is

Gruyère. Gruyère is kept longer on the fire and thus becomes harder than Fontine. It is often adulterated with potatoes. I have eaten Gruyère that was almost half potatoes—sound enough food, but not good cheese. Then, in Italy there is Gorgonzola, which should be eaten quite fresh. And there is another excellent cheese made in the Canavese. It is made from the milk of sheep, goats, and cows, all mixed together. It is rather like Gorgonzola.'

We sat round the fire outside the hut for an hour or more, eating our supper and discussing cheese. A cool wind began to eddy about us, catching the men in their backs, so Amar Sing took off his Kashmir turban and opened it into a shawl which he stretched behind all four of them for warmth. They looked like a group sheltering under the Virgin's mantle in a Venetian picture. Before nine o'clock I retired into the hut, stretched my coat on the floor for a mattress, crawled into my bag, took a knapsack for pillow, and slept soundly at once. I had hung my waistcoat on a nail, warning Aymonod not to let me forget it. 'I should have slept well,' he said to me next day, 'but for that waistcoat. I woke at midnight thinking of it and all the next two hours I had to fight for it in my dreams. For a man reached his two arms in through holes in the hut. With one he grasped the waistcoat and with the other he gripped my throat so that I could not cry for help.' Carrel alone remained awake. He would lie on a short bench and all the ends of him hung down over it.

*July 1.<sup>1</sup>*

We left the hut in mist, with all things unpleasant and unpromising, at three o'clock next morning, intend-

<sup>1</sup> Col de la Flégère. Left Floriaz hut at 3 A.M. on July 1. Mounted in one hour to the col south of the Aig. de la Glière (2851 m.), the point next to the south of the Aig. de la Floriaz. The name Glière is sometimes wrongly applied to other points. Descended a steep stone-swept couloir for three-quarters of an hour. Bore right for three-quarters of an hour to the Col de Bérard. Two hours and a half to top of Buet; three-quarters of an hour down north arête; three-quarters of an hour along ridge to Col du Vieux; twenty minutes across Vieux Emosson flat; lost the way, and took one hour, twenty minutes getting to Emosson.

ing in the first instance to cross the Col des Aiguilles Rouges ; but as we had no map and no notion which of several saddles might be the said col, we contented ourselves with going straight ahead toward the handiest gap. The mist presently left our immediate neighbourhood and disclosed two passes, separated by a tooth of rock, called Aiguille de la Glière, and with a peak immediately to the north of them, which I have since discovered to be the Aiguille de la Floriaz. We made for the saddle to the left, going to it over fields of winter snow, and up a rock gully and a final slope, fairly steep. The ascent employed an hour, during which the mists played about in graceful and unpromising manner. Most of Mont Blanc was visible and splendid as ever, with the glacier foam streaming down its flanks and the Aiguilles upholding it. The Calotte caught the pink of dawn, which presently fell on us and cast upon the snow our shadows, haloed with a deeper tone.

On looking down from the col, we saw that the work immediately before us was not altogether simple. We accordingly put on the rope and started down about as steep a snow-slope as can stand, filling a couloir which is raked all over by falling stones. The snow was in fine condition and the stones were asleep. Bearing away to the right we gained ice-worn rocks beside the hanging glacier, and easily descended them in a slanting direction till we reached some water where we breakfasted and took off the rope. We were surrounded now by a novel sort of scenery. The limestone Alps of Upper Savoy were displayed over against us. Their bold precipices rise in long walls from staged débris-slopes. Such cliff-topped mountains are seldom seen in crystalline regions.

An up-hill turn followed our breakfast halt. We trudged over snow-slopes and a zigzag path to the desolate Col des Cochons or de Bérard, which divides the Belvédère from the Buet. No walk was ever so toilsome to me. I felt as on the first day out of London. It was only late in the afternoon that a cramp revealed my *pattis*



SUMMIT OF MONT BLANC



as the cause. They were wound too tightly round my legs. Be warned, therefore, ye who take to *pattis*! Wind them tight round the ankle but looser round the calf. If, when going up hill, you feel an inclination to take unusually long steps and a dislike to any position that makes your toes strain up towards your knee, and if, withal, your legs are like lead and your heart beats feebly and fluttery within you, look to your *pattis*! assuredly they are ill put on.

At the col we passed over to the east face of the Buet's southern ridge and began traversing easy snow to the simple slope of the mountain. At no time had we any hope of a view, so that I watched without disappointment a splendid procession of lofty *cumuli*, filling up the Chamonix valley and hiding Mont Blanc. Clouds are every bit as beautiful as mountains, and all day long the cloud effects were superb. The snow-beds occasionally permitted an excellent zigzag path to emerge, and flowers, in which the Buet is so rich, to blossom beside it. With heavy legs and sleepy head I toiled incredibly up the easy slope. It was two hours and a half from the col before we had traversed the snow-field at the top and were standing by the enormous cornice wherewith this little mountain was dignified.<sup>1</sup>

The clouds permitted suggestive glimpses of various well-known snowy peaks, and opened one especial avenue for the Aiguille du Dru—a thoughtful attention; but it was down towards Sixt and away to the Rhone valley that the beauties of the scene were chiefly concentrated. A deep blue cushion of atmosphere filled the hollows and made them good to gaze into. A little garden of flowers was blossoming amidst the rocks near the summit and a profusion of butterflies played about them. How long we halted I know not—an hour or so perhaps—for the clouds and the blue valleys fascinated me and, as we expected to get wet anyhow, there was no occasion for hurry.

<sup>1</sup> The whole of it, I hear, was melted away by the middle of August.

When we did start we set our faces northward and followed the broad snow ridge to the top of a short steep rock-arête, as rotten as rocks can be, but safe and easy all the same. I seized the opportunity to put on the rope, because when roped I can look about me and stumble as much as I please, the responsibility for my safety being transferred to other shoulders. Unroped one loses the views whilst taking heed to one's feet. Below this arête came another col and a snow-filled glissadable gully. We traversed débris-slopes below the face of the Cheval Blanc, an ugly lump of a hill ; after which we mounted yet once more, in a senseless hurry for fear of an impending storm, and so reached the Col du Vieux just as hail began to fall smartly and thunder to clap its hands in a bored sort of way and not at all as if it desired an *encore*.

Below was an old lake basin called Vieux Emosson which ought to be a beautiful alp, only the grass has forgotten to grow and the place is a mere desert of small stones. This basin and the gorge beneath it form one branch of a Y, and the Barberine alp forms the other branch. Between them is an eastern promontory of the Pointe de la Finive. A big path leads up this promontory, pretending to be the way to Barberine. We were fools enough to be taken in by it and climbed needlessly for about half an hour whilst thunder grumbled around and a few drops of rain fell. Arrived at the path's highest point, we beheld far below, at the junction of the Y, the large Emosson alp, but no traces of man or cow, save a bit of new roof to one chalet which might imply a carpenter. If this lower alp was uninhabited, Barberine must clearly be so too. We changed our plans, therefore, and made straight for the new roof. Three quarters of an hour passed before we reached it, for the hill we had to descend was terraced. I fell over one of the small terraces and landed, sitting, in a swamp. Few adventures are less amusing to the chief performer.

The Emosson alp is a cow-village, but was uninhabited. On entering the cheese-making hut our gloomiest fore-

bodings were realised. Three walls and a half supported a crazy roof; the remainder of the fourth wall was open to the air. Last year's filth encumbered the floor. The only furniture was a huge new copper cauldron, big enough to boil two St. Johns at a time. Our dissatisfied men rummaged every corner of the place in hopes to find something. Aymonod presently discovered two locked rooms, one above the other, and saw through a crack in the door what appeared to be pots and pans. Karbir poked a stick into every crack in the stone walls and brought forth three rusty keys where-with we opened the upper chamber. That however contained only wooden buckets and other milking apparatus. The lower chamber defied our efforts till a loose plank was identified in the dividing floor. It was raised and access thus obtained to the store-room, whence a cooking pot, cups, and a wooden ladle were triumphantly brought forth. These sufficed. A fire was lit on the hearth. In its first eagerness it leapt to the roof and lit a rafter, but Karbir, who discovered the mischief, climbed up and put it out. As we dined, rain poured furiously on our draughty shelter and the night approached. In a pause between the storms we bolted under another roof, where we rolled ourselves comfortably on a bed of dry straw and shavings and were soon fast asleep.

*July 2.*

If ever a day ought to have been wet it was this. The weather had been tending to break up for some time and seemed at last to have broken; but the wind changed in the night, so that, when we left our shelter at 3.30 A.M. we came forth to a lovely morning. Around was a fair level alp, rich with flowers. The path led in half an hour to Barberine, another grassy lake basin beautiful to look upon, whence we turned up a side valley and so reached the Barberine col by half-past five.

To climb the Tour Sallières was my original intention, but I changed it through an irresistible desire for greener and less savage scenery than we had for some time been

passing through. A terraced amphitheatre opened before us, with fine cliffs on the left, below which, after a glissade, we were to circle round before ascending to the opposite Col d'Emaney. Mont Blanc looked across at us in unclouded perfection. Faint and sky-like the Oberland peaks rose against the sunny horizon with the dark blue mass of Le Luisin, a rich contrast, beside them. A previous visitor's presence was recorded by egg-shells and bottles (which the Gurkhas set up and threw stones at) as well as by tracks in the snow.

An hour and a half carried us to the Col d'Emaney over charming slopes. There were flowers in the grass, crags overhead, the grand snowy range across the distance, and bright sun in the melting sky. Here we met the first tourists we had seen, come up for the day from Salvan. We sat down on a jut of rock and looked sometimes toward the Grand Combin and sometimes at the Dent du Midi, where I could trace the route by which I made the ascent just twenty-two years before on a day as brilliant as this. The point of the Matterhorn kept itself constantly in sight and, to my surprise, the Gurkhas again recognised it.

A quick descent brought us in half an hour to the large flat alp of Salanfe above which tower the precipices of the Tour Sallières, and the Dent du Midi. The cows had not yet ascended to it, but a rank pasture, through which we waded, seemed to be calling for them. From the deserted Confrérie huts the extreme point of the Matterhorn was still in view and remained before us during the hour of our leisurely ascent up a traversing mule-path to the Col du Jorat. There a new view burst upon us and we descended a little way towards it, thus finally shutting out Mont Blanc and the Pennines. It was a view of green hills and rolling slopes, buried in blue air, with a corner of the Lake of Geneva on the midst, the vertical crags of the Dent du Midi on one side, and the snowy Diablerets on the other. Below us, 5000 feet down, was the flat floor of the Rhone valley to which we must now

descend. The prospect of so prolonged a bumping was not pleasant. We lay for an hour or more on a tiny flat, carpeted with softest grass, postponing our discomforts. The first hour of the descent was wearisome, for the sun was hot overhead and the stones hard under foot, but it brought us to the Jorat milk-chalet where we again rested and refreshed.

It was as well built and furnished a milk chalet as ever I saw, provided with improved utensils and kept by a man of gravely intelligent countenance. He served us with milk and showed us over the place with a kind of melancholy pride, answering all Aymonod's inquiries with detailed accuracy. The men won his heart by admiring his new churn which rocked instead of turning. 'We don't make *gras* cheese here but *maigre*, very *maigre*, and butter and *sérac* besides. This is what we have made to-day—that lump of butter and two cheeses and three blocks of *sérac*. The butter would sell for two and a half francs a kilo, the cheese for about a franc, and the *sérac* for forty-five centimes; but none of it is really sold. It is divided among the owners of the cows and they consume it themselves. They like *maigre* cheese best and that is why we make it. There are fifty cows altogether: four or five belong to one man, two to another, one each to others. They belong in fact to a company and so do the chalets and utensils. We are paid servants. At every milking we measure the yield of each cow with this stick. We put the stick upright in a bucket and read off the yield on a scale. That is all written down and the cheeses and things are divided during the season in proportion to the milk, so much to each owner. The refuse of the milk is given to the pigs. They come up *en pension*. We have food enough for plenty more of them than the dozen here this year. The prices of butter and things are a good deal higher than they were, for, in consequence of last year's drought, a great many cattle were sold out of the country or killed and eaten. You are going down to S. Maurice? Well! you have a

pleasant two hours' walk before you, for the path is good and shady almost all the way.'

And so, in fact, we found it to be. It descended rapidly and led through charming scenery, to beech woods and finally to chestnuts and vines. The air grew heavy and the vegetation luxuriant. A great lassitude overcame me, so that I parted from the others and made for the railway station at Evionnaz. But there was to be no train for four hours and there was not a horse in the village. The flies in the dirty café were intolerable, so I started again on foot along the hot and dusty road but was soon overtaken by a trotting cart. It was a springless hay-cart with a bench across it on which were seated the well-to-do owner and two boys, dressed in the uniform of some school. I asked for a lift, which was willingly accorded; so, climbing in behind, I sat on a sack of hay, and rejoiced to be off my feet. We trotted at a rattling pace along the noble valley, and I was kept bouncing like a rubber ball. The motion was not disagreeable; it recalled the memory of a certain twenty mile drive I once had behind a trotting bullock, whom the driver urged to action by screwing its tail, but that was far away, when I was wandering, archæologically minded, in the footsteps of Buddha. Arrived at S. Maurice in the full heat of the day I was too lazy for archæology. Instead of visiting the sanctuary of the Theban Legion, or the Grotto of the Fairies, I settled down to dinner at the railway buffet, and only when the cool hours came did I search the hotels and find my baggage and the men.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BERNESE OBERLAND: WESTERN PART.

#### S. MAURICE TO THE GEMMI.

*July 3.*

THE doings of this day were neither alpine nor barely sub-alpine. I am therefore relieved from the necessity of chronicling them. Lest suspicion should be roused, let me hasten to say that the hours were spent from morning to night in the most virtuous fashion, at various places on the Lake of Geneva. There was only one guiding factor in my plan, and that was to buy English tobacco—pounds of it, so that neither the Gurkhas nor I should again run short, as we had constantly done hitherto. I went therefore by train to Vevey, where all things English are to be had, and arrived before eight o'clock in the morning. Tobacco, as it were, met me in the streets. I filled my pouch with it, and my pockets, and made up a bundle of it to carry, and other bundles which I took to the post-office and posted to myself at various future places of call. That accomplished, the day was before me, so I purchased a novel and sought a café with a view of the lake. On the way was the market, where all the ground was spread with fresh plucked fruit, and the snare was not spread in vain. I vaguely remember writing up journals and correspondence in various lovely places, where trees gave shade, fountains plashed, and the lake waters laughed against the shore. I know I went somewhere by steamer, and awoke suddenly to find myself there. I was at Territet, too, where some Americans entered

into conversation with me, displaying a variety of accent quite new to my doubtless limited experience. I went up a string railway and visited Glion, one of the choicest spots on earth, with a view as fair as or fairer than that from proud Lausanne. I looked abroad over the lake, towards evening, when all the hills were searching the mysteries of the clouds and the Rhone valley was a vista of deep, deep blue. The wonderful lake spread away and I could sound its turquoise depths or let my eye wander over its many textured surface, here rippling in ordered undulation from a steamer's pulse, there trembling into grey under the breath of an island-breeze; westward, it was a broad flat of burnished silver, and beyond, the hills opened wide their arms to clasp the evening sky. It was a day to be remembered—a day of infinite delights, of ceaseless variety, of solitude that was not lonely, of limitless suggestiveness. The night found me back at S. Maurice, wrestling with telegrams, plans, accounts, and all manner of arrangements.

*July 4.*

It was eleven o'clock before I had done my own and everybody else's business and could start out of the Rhone valley frying-pan. There were three hours of pleasant driving to begin with, and only an occasional horse-fly to be whisked away. Soft mists hung about the hills. Chestnut and walnut trees reached down their heavy arms so low that I could raise my hand and feel the coolness of their unripe fruit as we zigzagged up amongst the vineyards. We passed through prosperous Bex, whose excellent shops caused me to halt and fill the provision sack. The Avançon valley that we thereupon entered is as rich and fertile as can be. A bright stream flows joyously down it, turning endless water-wheels, in the best of tempers. Nothing interferes with its merry song. My driver was at an outside guess fourteen years old. With the enthusiasm of youth, and the ignorance of the country, apparently characteristic

of S. Maurice folk, he took our vehicle up a short-cut, which went wrong, as all short-cuts do, so that we had to drive straight across a field to get back into the right road.

Without penetrating far into the hills, we mounted steadily, and the view developed behind, or rather beside us. The lower slopes of the Rhone valley, so much more delightful to look into than to be in, manifested their bewildering mass of green details. Sleep presently came and sat beside me, and I have but a dim reminiscence of flowery meadows and glittering foliage and of the Grand Moeveran's crags with mists clinging to them like a growth. All too soon we reached the pretty village of Gryon with its toy chalets, and there found Aymonod and the Gurkhas on a terrace lunching under beech-trees—a picture of content. When they had finished, Aymonod came over and told me stories of Sella, the Italian Minister, and of how my friend Signor Perazzi lost a bundle of clothing in a glacier and found it again seventeen years later. Thus the time passed till about three o'clock in the afternoon, when the power of the sun was lessening, and we made up our minds to move.

We followed a good road and a shady, past a petrifying stream, at which the Gurkhas drank to harden their insides. Above us on the right was a hill, looking in places as though it had been flayed, so smooth are its enormous slabs of tilted limestone. Under the shadow of a kindly cloud we entered a beautiful wood, or rather a succession of grassy clearings, varied foregrounds of entrancing loveliness. There were signs of human care on all sides, a bench under a tree, a water-trough by a cool spring with, as it chanced, a bunch of forget-me-nots freshly gathered, steeping in the corner. Opposite, a green strip of grass, smooth as a lawn, swept up the hill between two woods, trim and well kept as if it were at Longleat or Arundel.

We entered a larger open space, a great green

amphitheatre with the chalets of Solalex in the midst, and (as we learnt) two hundred cows grazing it. 'What splendid cattle!' exclaimed Aymonod, with obvious enthusiasm, for he is a connoisseur in cows and occasionally deals in them—coming to the Alps to buy, in times of drought, and conveying his purchases to Italy for sale. We halted at the best of the chalets to supply ourselves with milk, butter, and cheese.

Aymonod at once entered into conversation with the tenant. He is the best of men and the most charitable, but no cow's character, I aver, is safe in his hands. He loves to gossip about cows. With a cheesemaker for companion he is absolutely content. He opens fire not with questions but suggestions prefaced by flattery. 'You have splendid pasture here and what a number of cows—why! there must be a hundred at least. What? two hundred! that is a great number. Doubtless they belong to many proprietors. You have nineteen cows of your own? Well! that is enough to make a man rich. I suppose you make *gras* cheese. *Maigre*? *Maigre* cheese and butter seem to be the fashion in these parts, and even *maigre* is not bad if it is well made,' and so the talk goes on. He brings me from time to time any scrap of information especially interesting, as thus: 'They do with their cows here what I never heard of anywhere else. They turn them out at night to feed or sleep as they please and with no one to look after them; and they shut them up by day! It is extraordinary. They say it is too hot here for the cows to be in the open during the middle of the day.'

Presently all the cows came home to be milked. Each knew its shed and came first to its own cowherd for a mouthful of salt. Long we watched the pretty scene, then walked on up to the higher level, where the cows were to go in about ten days time to feed off the unusual expanse of grass belonging to the fortunate *commune* of Bex. Here we found Anzeindaz (1896 m.), a group of chalets, to one of which guest-chambers with

clean tables and beds are attached. A friendly hostess received us, after our quiet three hours' walk, and did everything possible for our comfort. The people had only come up for the summer the day before and provisions were short, but of course there was the ubiquitous box of sardines. Why do these small fish find their way into remoter places than meat, which would be so much better? Is it because they are put up into smaller boxes?

When I was in bed and the light put out I found that the sheets were damp. A stronger minded person would immediately have done something, whereas I lay in a vapour-bath for hours, dreamily wondering whether it would kill me or not. In the morning, of course, I had a tight chest, a feverish head, and the best of resolutions never, never to be so caught again.

*July 5.<sup>1</sup>*

At 4 A.M., when we left the little inn, there was one bright planet shining in the east over the Pas de Cheville, and one fleck of cloud in the sky. Both soon faded. The warm wind did not incommode us. As we mounted soft and easy grass-slopes towards the Diablerets, the Pennines steadily arose before us, led by the Weisshorn. Presently all the giants were there, round to the Matterhorn; singularly delicate they looked in their pearl-grey tones, projected against a pale salmon-coloured curtain of mist. They were dwarfed by a monster cloud that rose out of the Valtournanche to at least double the height of the Matterhorn. We gained the foot of the Diablerets' southern rock-face in an hour and a quarter. The climbing of it was easy work, though there were steep places. We zigzagged about on sloping shelves of débris, marked by traces of previous climbers, and thus in another hour and a quarter we were on the west ridge (2941 m.) looking down the Pierredar glacier into the deep hollow called

<sup>1</sup> Diablerets. Left Anzeindaz at 4 A.M. One hour and a quarter to foot of rocks; one hour, twenty minutes to west ridge; half an hour to summit; one hour and three-quarters down to point where left bank of Zanfleuron glacier was gained; half an hour to Sanetsch Pass; quarter of an hour to inn.

Creux de Champ, which I had not seen for sixteen years. Northward, the view was of green hills and open fertile valleys, rich and pleasant to look upon—more beautiful, I think, than a view of snowy ranges. A few yards further up the ridge we found an old climbers' hut, with its door standing open and the interior filled with snow—a wretched shelter. Here we encountered the steep final rocks of the actual peak, formidable looking but quite easy, even without the two or three iron stanchions that have been knocked in for hand-holds. We deliberated whether to put on the rope, but decided it was not necessary. In less than half-an-hour we stood on the summit, entranced by the beauty of the view.

All high mountains command fine views, but there are differences between them, both in kind and degree. I hold that on one side at least there should be green and fertile land. If a lake is visible so much the better. The eye, too, should somewhere plunge into a profound valley. The great ranges should not spread themselves out like a procession but should be grouped into masses. The Diablerets' view conforms to all these conditions. It commands the lake of Geneva and the Rhone valley. It overlooks the country of low hills. The Mont Blanc peaks, the Grand Combin, the Pennines, and the Oberland appear as separate groups in different directions.

As we arrived on the summit a light mist blew over it and we saw our shadows thereon projected, each within a brightly coloured halo. Before I could attempt to photograph the effect, it was gone. Only the Oberland remained coy behind a brilliant veil of cloud, through which its peaks showed, one at a time, in a glory of light from the low risen sun. We rested an hour on the top before starting down the easy Zanfleuron glacier, whose snow was in admirable condition. Most climbers hate snow-fields. I love them for their breadth and whiteness, the flatter and larger the better. Nowhere do you find such delicate gradations of shade, such graceful bendings, such refinement of form as in a snow-field. This of the



GRAND COMBIN FROM THE COL D'EMANEY



Zanfleuron is superb. It was snow right down to its foot. We quitted its left bank<sup>1</sup> with regret, an hour and three quarters below the summit, and descended a moraine chaos, which marks the glacier's many changes of form in shrinking. Thus we reached the Sanetsch pass by eleven o'clock.

We had been told there was an inn 'on the pass.' There was none. Was it down the north side or the south? We chose the north side and wasted two hours hunting there. We then turned southwards, past a wilderness of limestone rock, the Praz Rochier, smoothed by ice and cut about by runlets of water, so as to look for all the world like a glacier itself. Beside this we travelled in no pleasant humour. Cows appearing made us happier; we should at any rate be able to put up in a cow chalet. We turned a corner, and lo! an excellent little hotel stood before us, new built, and promising every comfort. It is the Sanetsch Hotel on the Zanfleuron alp, a place that may be recommended to visitors in search of quiet, and fine views. Its windows command a glorious prospect, looking straight up the Val d'Hérens to the col at its head, the Matterhorn beyond, and the other Pennines around from the Rothhorn to the Grand Combin.

The cows had only just arrived for the summer and the people who brought them were picnicking at the foot of a large wooden cross. Each had a small keg which he applied to his mouth from time to time, throwing his body back on the grass and letting the liquid flow vertically. I could not hear their talk, but a few words reached me. 'What have you got in your bottle?' asked a man of a woman, whose wooden keg was as large as any and the last drop of which I saw her drain. 'Cognac,' was her simple reply. She seemed none the worse for it. When the time came to load the mules and start down, she it was who lent a hand everywhere and always noticed the loose ends that needed fastening. I saw

<sup>1</sup> We ought to have got off at its right foot.

them depart with regret, for they made a pleasant and harmonious group in the foreground, and all I cared to do was to sit and watch them and the changeful clouds.

The Diablerets and Wildhorn district is rich in water. All high mountain areas on which snow lies must pour large volumes of water down their flanks, but in the Diablerets region the water percolates into the ground and comes forth in many sources, easily caught and distributed. How to catch and distribute water is the chief agricultural problem in high mountain areas. There is always plenty of water, but it flows rapidly away down torrential channels, and effects little or no natural irrigation. Though rain falls in tolerable plenty, the steepness of the slopes carries it quickly forth and the dryness of the air and power of direct solar radiation soon make the land thirsty. Thus, without artificial irrigation, few high mountain regions can be fertile, and many, such as the Central Asiatic area, are deserts.

In Hunza we noticed and recorded the admirable system of artificial irrigation elaborated by the natives, but we were unable to learn under what ordinances the water is distributed. The great canal that catches glacier water behind Baltit and disperses it over the fields of Hunza is a marvel that awoke Zurbriggen's astonishment. I have never seen in the Alps one so large or so boldly engineered. In Switzerland small canals are extremely common and there are a few large ones. Various names exist for them in different localities — *Wasserleiter*, *Bisse*, and so forth. Such canals, being essential to cultivation of any sort, are in many cases of high antiquity. In the Valtournanche are ruins of two, of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. Others are mentioned in the earliest archives. For instance the will, dated 11 December 1366, of Bishop Guichard Tavelli refers to them, and earlier examples might be quoted.

In many cases the water had to be brought from a source in one commune and through the lands of other

communes before it reached the commune that needed it. The building, maintenance, and distribution of such canals involved the negotiation of regular treaties between the communes interested, and formed a valuable training in local government and administration. The canal that irrigates the lands of Törbel, above Visp, is of this character. Its waters come all the way from the Augstbord pass. It is said to be four hundred years old, and to have been made, maintained, and administered under conditions that have never required amendment. Of how few political documents can such a statement be made! As we shall hereafter see, Törbel was an enlightened commune at an early date.

One of the most famous *bisses* in the Alps conveys water from the Brozet and Zanfleuron glaciers down to the Savièse commune in the vine-region of Sion. This *Bisse de la Savièse* can be proved to have existed as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It is remarkably engineered, for it has to be carried long distances across the face of precipices. Without it Savièse would be a wilderness. The canal follows the left bank of the Morge and the Crêtabessa precipices. It is constructed entirely in wood, rock, and earth. The oldest part of the structure is where it and the maintenance-path beside it are carried across the face of the Brenlire rocks on posts driven horizontally into the face of the mountains. At the opening of winter, parts liable to be destroyed by avalanches are removed. They are put back in spring-time and a muddy stream of earth, leaves, and water is sent along the channel to fill up cracks before the clear water is permitted to flow. Where the canal debouches on easy ground in the Savièse forests is a chapel dedicated to S. Margaret, slayer of dragons.

The use of the water is divided into eight hundred and thirty shares, the property of shareholders, who must be burghers of the commune of Savièse. Each share entitles

<sup>1</sup> See *L'Aqueduc ou Bisse de la Savièse en Valais*, par Albert Franzoni, Geneva, 1894.

the owner to have water turned on to a certain area of land for three hours daily, but he may underlet his three hours in subdivisions of not less than three-quarters of an hour. The council of the commune appoint two registrars, who control the distribution of the water and keep the books, wherein the rotation of hours is recorded. These books go back to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

July 6.<sup>1</sup>

We left the Sanetsch inn, regretfully, at five o'clock, though regret was tempered with some little resentment at the proportions of the bill. A clear sunrise broke upon all the mountains and the colour lingered long. Over the Rhone valley an unusually delicate effect was produced by the density and richness of the air. About an hour's walk brought us to a subsidiary col (2606m. apparently nameless) giving access to the upper part of the Brozet valley. We circled round to the glacier, above the lakes of *les grandes Gouilles*, and so reached the Brozet pass (2826m.) in another short hour. Breakfast was taken on some rocks above the pass, whence we commanded the green expanse of open valleys which drain into the Saanen. Beyond them was one more range of low rock-crested hills, which look down on the Lake of Thun. The sky was barred across, as is so often the case, at a certain height where the tint suddenly changes from purple to blue, or from blue to white. Just dipping into the purple, there floated a fleet of little clouds, like *nautili* upon a calm sea. The winter snow-beds were greatly reduced and no longer patched the landscape about and destroyed its picturesque effect as they did for us in Italy. In a general way, it may be said, that, after we

<sup>1</sup> Wildhorn (3264 m. 10709 ft.). Left Sanetsch Inn at 5 A.M. Two hours to Brozet Pass (2826 m.). Climbed to the summit in one and a half hours by going diagonally up the west face just below the rocks, and then straight up them to the peak. Descent in half an hour north-east to a pass. Ten minutes further quitted glacier for left bank. Half an hour over limestone débris and glacier-polished rock; one and a half hours down to the Ravins Alp in the Rière Valley; three-quarters of an hour up to Valseret Alp.

crossed the Ruitor glacier, the scenery improved, mountains took a nobler form, colour became richer, and picturesque groupings more numerous and effective.

Striking out what is certainly not the right way up the Wildhorn,<sup>1</sup> we ascended diagonally a little east of north over snow-slopes that steadily increased in steepness. Passing under some remarkable crags, we observed that they pour their ruins at frequent intervals down the slopes over which we were slowly cutting our way. The sun had not yet reached them or us, so we felt fairly safe. Here and there snow gave place to ice, and the slope again steepened to such an angle that if the snow had not been hard frozen, we could not safely have ascended further. A final and rather difficult scramble up smooth limestone rocks, that gave little hold, landed us almost directly on the summit of the Wildhorn in an hour and a half from the Brozet pass. The highest point was of snow and looked down on the rock-peak where the surveyor's signal stands.

Aymonod gave one look round and said, 'Here it is good to come. What beauty!' His praise was well deserved, for the view is of the first order, and we saw it almost to perfection, notwithstanding a few clouds about the Oberland. The great visible extent of the Rhone valley is a characteristic of it; but what, I think, gave me most pleasure was a broad green arm of mountain descending southward from the Wildstrubel, and breaking at one place into a wooded and grassy plateau decked with several little lakes. The place is called Les Crans or Plan Bramois and is a couple of hours walk above Sierre. It must command a superb view of the Pennine and Mont Blanc ranges. 'What a lovely site for a summer chalet!' I exclaimed, not knowing that a few weeks before a hotel had been opened in the neighbourhood, near Montana village.

<sup>1</sup> The proper way up the Wildhorn from the Brozet glacier is to go eastward to the col (3166 m.) which gives access to the Glacier des Audannes, and then northward to the peak. There is no difficulty.

The descent was straightforward over snow that was still good. We bore to the north-east for half an hour to a pass, following the tracks of at least three previous parties. Determined to seek shelter for the night at some chalet in the southward Liène valley, we bent that way and quitted the glacier. We should have done better to keep all the way down its right side. For half an hour we traversed slippery limestone débris and glacier-polished limestone rock. Limestone is the most unkindly substance. It breaks and weathers into rounded fragments which have no cohesion, and it is so smooth that the boot does not hold upon it. We all fell from time to time, in each case heavily, as one falls on a frozen pond. Below this disagreeable region we were not out of our troubles, for a precipice cut us off from the valley, and it was some time before we found our way down it by a grass gully (as far to the right as we could reach), the descent of which was exciting to me, for I have no more confidence in grass than in rope bridges.

Thus we arrived at the head of a fertile alpine valley, where trees saluted us at an unusually high level. On either hand waterfalls burst from the rock, each formed by a number of jets like so many fountains leaping sheer out of the face of the cliff. Going very leisurely, we came by the Rawyl Pass track to a cheesemaker's chalet at Les Ravins, where I hoped to pass the night. It was not a promising place, having only three walls and no furniture, nor any hay to lie on. We were not sorry to hear that there was another chalet likewise occupied, an hour up in the direction of our next day's climb, to which we might proceed.

Whilst the men were heating some milk for us, Aymonod, as usual, engaged them in conversation and gave them good advice and tempered criticism. 'You only came up yesterday! why, you should have come a fortnight ago, the grass is already a little too old. Eight days ago it must have been in splendid condition.

You don't sleep in here, I suppose. What? this is all the house you have, and with such fine pastures too. What do you do if it rains?'

'Oh,' replied one of the men, 'I always go out with the cows and sleep somewhere around. If it rains I have my cloak, or I get under a tree. That is the way we do. Some of the men sleep on the floor here, or on a bench, where they please. Our cows are not accustomed to come under a roof at night.'

'I don't like that way of doing at all,' said Aymonod; 'you could easily accustom the cows to a roof. I think ours is a better way than yours.'

When I had heard enough of this kind of thing I wandered forth, but the words *gras* and *maigre* kept reaching my ears. The cheese discussion was begun.

A double dose of original folly may safely be postulated of the inhabitants of a valley whose paths take you frequently down hill when you are on your way up. Such was the path that engaged our attention for an hour between one chalet and the next. The sun, which had been hidden whilst we were resting, came forth in all its wretched afternoon glory to shine straight upon our backs. We arrived therefore at the Valseret hut, which was to be our night's resting-place, in no contented frame of mind. Nor were we rendered happier by finding the inside of the place dirty, the outside foul on the only shady face, and swarms of flies infesting everything. Karbir alone did not mind, but, discovering a one-legged milking stool, strapped it on to his person and went waddling about, pretending that he was milking restless cows and trying to persuade them to keep still. When the cows came jangling in, the peasants gathered round a fire near the door to eat their evening meal of hard bread and *maigre* cheese, which they toasted at the embers. They brought infinite flies with them, and altogether they were the dirtiest lot of men and boys I ever saw. With their mouths stuffed full they

shouted at the cows, whilst the wind whisked the ashes of the fire into their faces. Nothing disturbed their callous equanimity. The one fairly clean thing about was a yellow and white kitten, that climbed everywhere and seemed far more intelligent than the men. When each had finished his cheese he filled himself a measure of hot milk which he drank from a ladle, blowing on it first to cool it, and perhaps steeping some bread in the pot. They hid their loaves and cheeses, when done with, in various dirty corners and holes. The cows meanwhile looked in at the door and snorted, waiting to be milked. No one spoke; only the flies were gay. Work began as soon as the meal was done. The morning's cheeses had to be removed from their rock-laden presses. They were still white and elastic. The kitten stood upon its hind legs to observe the process. Then every one strapped on his one-legged stool and went forth to the milking, except the cheese-maker, who prepared the cauldron. About this time I found our men grouped in a sunny place on the grass. I joined them, wrapped my head in my coat to keep off the sun and flies, and was going to sleep, when twelve pigs visited my calves. They were driven off squealing and I slept. I awoke to find a rain-storm and the sky black with clouds. When all the cows were milked, the milk measured, and the great cauldron put over the fire, the men knelt on one knee on the dirty floor and said their prayers, all reverently in chorus, facing the bed. A small boy whistled loudly, and the pigs hurried through the herd and scrambled expectantly about a trough. Three men came forth with sticks and walked away; without word given the cows turned and followed them. In the succeeding quiet we ate our soup upon the grass, with the kitten playing round us, and making repeated dashes at our meat tin.

To sleep in the foul hut was impossible. I chose a clean hollow on the grass, had the stones raked from

it, crawled into my eiderdown sack (no one should travel without an eiderdown sleeping-bag) and wrapped my coat about my head and shoulders, leaving a crack for the view. Five minutes later I was wondering how the mountains came to be lying on their sides, and almost simultaneously it was night and Aymonod was searching my face with a lantern, bidding me wake.

July 7th.<sup>1</sup>

Half-past two in the morning seemed an early hour to start for so small a peak as the Wildstrubel; yet, as events proved, it was none too early. Bored and sleepy I followed the lantern for an hour to the grass col at the head of our little side valley, where we extinguished it. Turning to the left, due north, we ascended a monotonous trough filled with limestone débris, nasty as usual, across a ridge, to a remarkable hollow amphitheatre or desert valley called the Plaine Morte. Such hollows, or wholly enclosed valleys, exist hereabouts, because the drainage, instead of filling them with water and cutting the barrier down, bores into the ground and doubtless does some subterraneous dissolving, which tends to deepen the depression. We saw one considerable stream plunging into a rock *moulin*, after previously burrowing its way through a second rock barrier higher up. Doubtless these are the same waters that leap from the hillside so copiously at the point noticed on the previous day. Such subterranean channels are common in this limestone district, and, as some of them may well penetrate deep into the hotter parts of the earth's crust, it is not surprising to find in this same geological area the hot springs of Leukerbad.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plaine Morte. Left Valseret Alp at 2.30 A.M. One hour to stony Plaine Morte; one hour over it to edge of glacier; half an hour up snow to top of a mound of rock at west end of Plaine Morte glacier; one hour to extreme east end of Plaine Morte glacier; three-quarters of an hour to Schneejoch; three-quarters of an hour down left side of glacier to right side of Lämmern glacier; one and a half hours to Gemmi; one hour to Leukerbad.

<sup>2</sup> Two of the Dachstein glaciers similarly drain into hollows from which their waters find an underground exit, reappearing at the Waldbachsprung.

Over the dreary desert-basin, with its black and brown débris, we laboured slowly to a lake (2700m.) below a broad short curtain of glacier. We climbed the glacier to the right, circled round, and gained the summit of a mound of rock (2815m.) at its head, where we halted for breakfast.

It was a spot worth halting at. Behind were Mont Blanc and the Grand Combin 'smoking their pipes,' as Aymonod put it, but we did not look much at them. Ahead was the sight worth coming thus far to see. Twenty-two years before, on the occasion of my first visit to the Alps, I purchased certain sheets of the Dufour map, cut out so much of them as liberally included the Bernese Oberland and pasted the pieces together. In the corner of that map (it lay before me as I sat on the rock mound) is a considerable white patch, almost featureless, marked *Glacier de la Plaine morte*.<sup>1</sup> Well do I remember the curiosity that patch raised in me. What could the great cup-shaped snow-field, that had no exit, be like? And the same question often recurred, when, from the summits of Pennine peaks, I beheld, along the northern boundary of the view, the mass of the Wildstrubel and perhaps a suggestion of the great cup's edge along the crest of the Autannaz ridge, which forms its southern lip. Now the whole white area was before us, doubtless one of the most remarkable sights in the Alps. It is so large, so simple, so secluded. It seems like a portion of some strange world. Its effect of size is increased by the insignificance of the wall that surrounds it—enough to shut out all distant views and no more. The sense of novelty, of strangeness came upon me, such as I felt when all the Hispar glacier under its dark roof of cloud first opened on my view. Beautiful too it was, with the beauty of all great snow-fields; its large undulations, its rippled surface, glinting under the touch of the low risen sun. To add to its mystery, there came over the sky a veil of

<sup>1</sup> The eastern half of it is now known as Wildstrubel glacier. Both drain together northwards as the Râzli glacier.

mist, which presently reduced the brilliancy of the day, increasing the apparent size of everything and lengthening all distances. Two birds, like swallows, twittered around, and seemed out of place.

After a long halt we started to traverse the white plain. The snow was beautifully hard and remained so throughout the hour of our passage, thanks to a cool breeze and the veiling of the sun. I was determined to penetrate to the furthest extremity of the basin and accordingly gave up all idea of climbing the Wildstrubel, from which there would have been no view to speak of.

I have described the snow-field as a cup, for such is its appearance, but we had not gone far eastwards before discovering that the cup is breached to the north and drains slowly down the Rüzli glacier, which ought therefore to consist of as pure ice as any glacier in the Alps. The breach is slight, and only the tops of a few insignificant hills of Thun are visible through it. We put on the rope for form's sake, but it was useless, the only crevasses (and they were few) being cracks into which a finger could scarcely be inserted. Over large areas even these are lacking, and the melted snow lies about on the surface in pools, and freezes again into glittering mirrors. It was strange to be so shut in—no Pennines, no Mont Blanc, no Oberland, not even the Wildstrubel in sight:<sup>1</sup> only a low featureless wall, a few hundred feet of snow slope, rising almost all round.

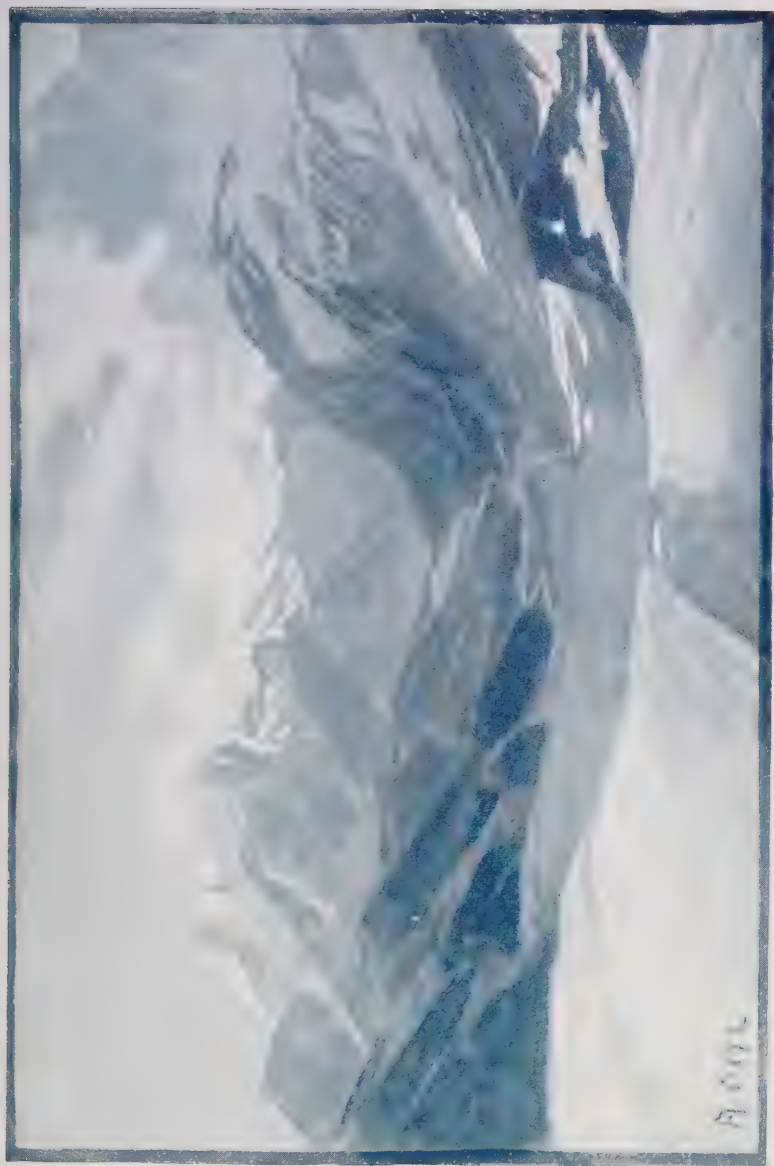
Half-way across we were surprised to come on the tracks of a party, who, a day or two before, must have traversed the plain from north to south, that is to say, along its shortest diameter; they probably crossed the Lämmernjoch. We advanced at an easy pace, treading on the crests of the ripples, and passing over slight undulations. The further we went the more profound was the solitude. Here a man might come and, setting up his tent for a week, learn what it is to be alone. He

<sup>1</sup> Only the lower point (3251m.) the butt-end of the Wildstrubel's ridge, is visible from the snow-field.

might wander safely in any direction and, climbing the wall at any point, look out upon the world of hotels and tourists; then returning to his lone abode, he might kindle his solitary lamp and cook for himself the cup of contemplation.

The snow-field near its eastern extremity dips to the south and gives access to a ridge of débris (the east end of the Autannaz ridge) from which we looked southward upon Sierre. Here, too, others had been before us the previous day, of whom more anon. They came from the new Montana hotel and passed northward, leaving tracks which we followed and found useful. These led us in three quarters of an hour to a higher col, the Schneejoch, south-east of the Schneehorn. The ascent lay up a snowy hollow, wherein we lost sight of the beautiful plain. From the col the Schwarzhorn glacier slopes steeply away. We descended it, bearing far to the left and passing round the end of a line of séracs, through the midst of which, as it happened, we might have made a way and saved distance. As it was, we had to cross some rather dangerous slopes, covered with the débris of falling stones from the Schneehorn and deeply grooved by them in two places.

One of these grooves caused an incident. It was about eight feet deep and its further side was of soft snow and quite vertical. Amar Sing, who was leading, went for the wall as though it had been an insult. He jumped at it and thrust his four extremities into it. The frail substance was not strong enough for such treatment, so back he fell into the groove and down it into a crevasse, where the rope stopped him. Fortunately no stones came along at the moment or his head would have suffered. Karbir hauled him out and he returned to the charge, with a better understanding of what had to be done. In this fashion we rounded to the right bank of the Lämmern glacier above the ice-fall, descended some rocks (2716m.) by awkward shale-slopes, poised above a precipice, and so reached the level ice below. It dips steeply



LOOKING TOWARDS THE GLACIER FROM THE LÄMMERN GLACIER



at its snout, which protrudes like an ugly tongue, broadening at the tip. We made the mistake of scrambling off on the left bank, instead of the right, and descending a gully to the large flat mud-basin, the Lämmernboden, from which the ice has retreated. The water, flowing from this glacier, is the dirtiest I ever saw in the Alps and gives a slight idea of the normal colour of Karakoram glacier torrents.

The hotel on the Gemmi had long been in sight. We reckoned soon to reach it, but the tilted limestone hereabouts is arranged in contrary little dips and walls; besides, as we were on the left bank of the river, we still had the water to cross.<sup>1</sup> This was no easy matter till Aymonod found a place where the torrent was divided into three parts, which a handy plank enabled us to dispose of in turn. Our predecessors of the day before were less fortunate and had to spend the night out by the bank of the torrent almost within cry of the Gemmi hotel.

It was 11.30 when we arrived at this grandly situated hostelry, and for a wonder the Pennine range was almost clear, though dwarfed by a great roof of cloud. The view, I suppose, is wonderful, but it did not move me, and I asked myself why. The answer seems to be that I was too familiar with every detail in it. There was scarcely a peak in sight, great or small, that I had not climbed, not a valley that I had not penetrated. Every object was swathed in reminiscences. There may be a charm in this kind of retrospect, but it is not the charm of beauty. One could not regard a collection of one's relatives as a mere picturesque group. It is only strangers, peasants, or foreigners that can be looked upon comfortably in that sort of aloof and impersonal manner. A country, not one's own, should not be known too well. Its charm evaporates with its freshness.

After lunch I sat in the verandah, listening to the rattle

<sup>1</sup> The proper route, I am informed, is to follow the right bank all the way to the inn.

of the rain and hail on the roof and looking at the mountains through the wet and sun-illumined veil. An Austrian and a couple of Swiss from Zürich were near me, loudly discussing (one of them was deaf) their respective nationalities. Nothing but compliments were bestowed upon the Viennese and the people of Zürich, for reasons of mutual tickling, but all others came in for abuse; the Hungarians were proud like the people of Bern, who were only less so than the people of Basel; the Genevese were no better than French; all the French-speaking Swiss were a poor lot. Only in Vienna and Zürich were there no prejudices, no bumptiousness, no disadvantages. In fact, as they summed the matter up, 'there are many towns in the world but there is only one Vienna and one Zürich.'

When the rain ceased, Karbir and I ran down in less than an hour to Leukerbad. The thunder rattled behind us, but only a drop or two of rain found us out. Karbir was full of chatter, and the words were jerked out of him in groups. Arriving at the village I consigned him to the bootmaker and myself to the comforts of recovered baggage and the excellent Hôtel des Alpes.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MONTE ROSA

9-10 *July*.

It was my intention to cross from Leukerbad over the Torrenthorn, a famous point of view, to Ried in the Lötschenthal. This in fact would have been the direct continuation of our route. After a day's rest, partly devoted to re-shoeing the Gurkhas, we accordingly prepared to set forth at a comfortable hour for this easy climb. The mail however coming in at that moment brought a letter which effected a change in our plans. The writer, in whose judgment I have confidence, put it to me that, with whatever geographical purism our route might be constructed to traverse the Alps from end to end, the account of it would notwithstanding convey a false impression to the reading public, if it contained no reference to the Central Pennine group of mountains and no description of a climb amongst them. Sacrificing our arrangements, therefore, to literary exigencies, we altered our direction for the day. The men left their packs in my keeping and marched down the valley, whilst I followed in a vehicle an hour or two later.

The drive interested me little, for the mood of a man must match the scenery or his eyes will be blind to beauty. It was not till we reached the high angle, where the road sweeps out of the narrows and the broad stretch of the Rhone valley opens long and straight below, that I awoke to the splendour of the scene, and then only because of Pennell's drawing of Le Puy already referred to. The most beneficent function of an artist is, perhaps, not the mere creation of a work of beauty, but the education thereby of those capable of appreciating it, so that thenceforward they are enabled to perceive,

in natural scenes, elements of beauty, to which they would otherwise have been blind. The artist's business is to rend beauty forth from nature, as Dürer said, and to make it manifest. Beauty thus manifested can be perceived by almost any willing eye, and its like thenceforward recognised in scenes of a nature similar to that wherefrom the artist quarried.

The narrow-gauge and, in places, cogged railway carried us up to Zermatt. It is the fashion to abuse these improved mountain high-ways, a foolish fashion to my thinking. Before the Zermatt railway was made, 30,000 people annually visited the place. They had to walk or ride from Visp to S. Niklaus by the single mule-path, and their baggage had to be taken up by pack-animals. The foul condition into which the road was brought by the end of August can scarcely be conceived and will never be forgotten by those who experienced it. For the sake of mere decency and cleanliness some better system of transportation was needed. Now I dare say 60,000 or more persons are annually conveyed to Zermatt by train, but the traveller who desires a quiet country walk can follow the path on foot and will find it clean and almost deserted. Doubtless an ordinary road would have served all needful purposes, but it could not be had. The short-sighted commune of Visp, to whom the lower part of the valley belongs, refused permission, thinking thus to retain a larger number of tourists for one night in their stifling village and to secure employment for their mules. Only a railroad concession, for which their assent was not required, could over-ride the village veto. The Vispachers are probably regretting their obstinacy, now that it has resulted in empty inns and unemployed beasts. A road would have made their fortune.

The crowds that flood Switzerland in the best season of the year only become endurable to mountain lovers when they are dammed into channels and controlled. They consist for the most part of glorified trippers—

good folk of their sort, but not beautiful *en masse*. They have to be kept going from morning to night. With infinite docility they follow from hour to hour the appointed path, ascending even in rain to points of view, and taking their luck, for the most part contentedly. It cannot be denied that the regular Swiss Round, which belongs to them, is admirably contrived and includes the pick of easily accessible Alpine scenery. If unconventional and quiet-loving travellers are not robbed of it, they have to thank modern modes of transportation for their immunity. Every new hill railroad, every recognised lunching-place or Belvedere, becomes a further clamp that yet more irrevocably holds the crowd to its particular and narrow route. At Chamonix, for instance, if you shun table d'hôte and certain paths at certain hours, you need hardly see a tourist. They have their places and their times and can be avoided now as a few years ago they could not be avoided.

We found Zermatt, if changed at all by the railway, changed for the better. It lost its pristine simplicity years ago, and was on a par with frequented watering-places before ever a locomotive-whistle raised the echoes of the valley. The coming of the railway has enabled the crowd to be better controlled and better supplied. Their hours of arrival and departure are now fixed; they flood in at one time and are distributed for food and sleep. They all start together for the Gorner Grat and they leave together at the hour ordained. Of course the resident population, by which I mean the visitors who come to stay, is no longer of the old type. A large proportion consists of invalids and old people who could never have reached Zermatt at all without the railway to bring them. There are fewer climbers though perhaps ascents are more numerous, for multitudes undertake a scramble as an exceptional experience, who in the old days would not have dreamt of going on snow. There appear to be few or no habitués. The guides, who have greatly increased in numbers,

complain that work is diminishing except during a few days in the height of the season.

One of the first persons I encountered was old Melchior Anderegg, one of the oldest Swiss guides. Age has compelled him to give up serious climbing, but he cannot be idle. 'Well, Melchior,' I said, 'what are you doing here?'

'Oh, I'm too old to climb, so now I go *blumensuchend* with ladies!'<sup>1</sup>

'And how do you find Zermatt now-a-days? very different from what we remember, isn't it?'

'Yes, indeed! Why, the visitors are as old as I am; they are sick, crippled, hunchbacked, and so forth—one wonders how they came and how they will get away. All the guides tell me the place is going down as a climbing centre. There are no climbers. In old days visitors used at any rate to be healthy persons; now they are a poor sick lot.'

My old guide Trüffler told me the same tale. 'I am going to make my boys into hotel waiters,' he said. 'I have done well as a guide, but the young men will not have the same chance. There are too many of them for the work. Visitors climb the Breithorn, Monte Rosa, the Matterhorn, and a few other regular mountains, but the rest are left alone. The life of a guide here is not what it was.'

Later on in the season, I am informed, Zermatt, as a climbing centre, had a renaissance. The Monte Rosa hotel was purified of loafers. One mountaineer attracted another, till there came to be quite a large group of mountain-lovers gathered together. It was like the old days come again.

July 11.

Our intention in coming to Zermatt was to traverse the Matterhorn, but a single glance at the mountain showed it to be for the time inaccessible. Not a guide

<sup>1</sup> Later in the season, however, he went climbing as usual. Old Christian Almer, who is Melchior's senior, still continues guiding.

would stir for it at any price. The south-west wind had for some days prevailed, and still kept sweeping against the solitary tower masses of cloud which cast hail and snow upon its upper rocks. No neighbouring mountain received such treatment. The Gabelhorn and Rothhorn remained almost clear of fresh snow, whilst the Matterhorn became hourly whiter. We reckoned, on our arrival, that one really fine day would bring the peak into climbable condition; next morning we agreed that two days would not be too much; before we left the place a week would scarcely have sufficed. The fates were against us.

If the Matterhorn was closed Monte Rosa was not; so we started after lunch on the 11th and walked slowly up to the Riffelalp and on to the old Riffelberg inn. A broad and well engineered mule-road has supplanted the faint foot-track, where, in 1872, I lost my way in the dark and wandered for hours on the hill-side. It would be hard to lose the way there now, even in the darkest night. The old Riffel inn is little changed. It was sparsely occupied by visitors of an active sort, bent on some expedition next day, weather permitting.

But would the weather permit? That was the question—the eternal weather-question of mountain regions. As night came on, the sky cleared and stars sparkled forth in apparent millions, too bright and twinkling to please an experienced eye. The south-west wind continued to blow with unabated vigour, bringing moisture from the plains and sea. We confined ourselves to hoping that we might be able to reach our summit next morning before the storm actually broke. A very early start was therefore essential.

July 12.<sup>1</sup>

Promptly at midnight I was summoned from a deep

<sup>1</sup> Nord End. Left the upper Riffel Inn at 12.40 A.M. One hour, ten minutes to Gorner glacier; one hour to Plattje; three-quarters of an hour to the Felsen; three and a half hours up the Monte Rosa glacier to the *bergschrand*; three and three-quarter hours up face to north-west arête, and so to the top. Descent in one hour to Silber Sattel; one and a half hours to the Felsen; two and a half hours to the upper Riffel.

delicious slumber. In half an hour a hasty breakfast was despatched and we were on our way, lighted by two flickering lanterns. There was no change in the weather, save that a broad bed of cloud lay across the south, and was piled high over the Theodul Pass. We marched steadily up the good path leading to the gap between the Riffelhorn and Gorner Grat. Beyond the gap it traverses the broad hillside and descends slowly to the Gorner glacier. It has of late been much improved, so that mules can follow it to the edge of the ice, a state of things very different from the old.

We noticed with surprise the number of mule foot-prints in the way. They were accounted for when we learnt that a climbers' hut was in process of construction on the *Plattje* of Monte Rosa, and that mules were actively engaged in carrying the materials for it, not only to, but actually across the glacier. In little more than an hour we trod the ice. For the first time I was upon a large European glacier since returning from the Himalayas;<sup>1</sup> I was astonished to find how relatively small were all the details about me. The glacier itself did not look small, but the streams upon its surface, the mounds of its unevenness, the stones, the medial moraines, the *moulins*, were all unexpectedly tiny. The séracs only, in the Alps, attain the same proportions as in the Karakorams. At one place we came to a surface-stream which had undercut its bank, as do the surface-streams on the Hispar glacier, but the height of the overhang thus formed was not more than ten feet, and the impediment caused no delay. Night still reigned in its blackest hour. Nowhere was there visible promise of dawn. Over the Weissthor the Pleiades were rising on the edge of the ice. The great mountains stood up dimly around, felt rather than seen. Our tread crunched the crisp honey-combed surface of the glacier;

<sup>1</sup> The Miage glacier, which we had been on, is of course a large one, but has not the upper breadth and extent of the Gorner. It is fed by ice torrents, and not by such great reservoirs as are the Gorner and Aletsch.

streamlets jangled past beneath us, or leapt into mills; the wind visited us in noisy puffs. Now and again a step had to be cut, and once the strained glacier burst across with a ringing sound at the point where Carrel's axe struck it, and a baby crevasse was formed.

We did not take the best way over the ice, and we remained on it too long, thus providing for ourselves difficulty in effecting an exit on to the moraine that borders the rocks called the Plattje at the foot of Monte Rosa. It is here that the new hut was building. The carefully made road to it, easily found by daylight, would have saved us trouble. Above the hut one mounts over rough crystalline rocks, rounded by the ancient glacier that covered them, and up a few snow-slopes to the highest rocks, called *Auf'm Felsen*, where we could extinguish the lanterns on halting for a brief meal.

Such halts for refreshment are among the best of mountain pleasures. They are generally made in the midst of fine scenery and at some period of the climb when a definite stage of the work has been accomplished, so that there is a sense of repose well earned. But this morning there was no pleasure in our halt. The wind was already howling about us. Shelter could not be found. The sky was overcast with leaden clouds which, hanging above or behind the mountains, seemed to depress them into little hills. Only in the blue, purple, and grey chord of colour was there a strange dignity and beauty of a threatening sort. We could hardly eat for shivering. Each put on whatever extra wrap he had and prepared to face the elements. At a quarter-past four we fastened ourselves to the rope and started again in grim humour.

The sun was just coming up and pouring a golden flood of light beneath the roof of clouds. It caught their rippled undersurface and revealed a series of tiny parallel wavelets, formed by the hurrying wind. Monsieur Vallot, in one of his papers, recording the results of observations made at his observatory on Mont Blanc,

shows how, during the course of a gale, gusts of wind are accompanied by sudden diminution of atmospheric pressure, and their cessation by a recovery; whence he very justly concludes that such gusts are caused by the passing of little cyclones. It is probable that these cyclets are produced where the hurrying air comes in contact with mountains. In aerial regions remote from the earth's surface they are less likely to arise. The rippled structure of the undersurface of the clouds this day was proof that, in them at any rate, notwithstanding the fury of the gale, cyclets were not present. Great waves and umbrellas of cloud hung over most of the peaks. There was a pallor as of death upon the snow. Suddenly Karbir called a halt, and handed me the photographic apparatus, for the tip of the Matterhorn looked as though it had just been withdrawn from some Titanic blast furnace. Upon no other point did the rising sunlight fall. What a difference there is between these alert Gurkhas and the duller peasantry of the Alps, for whom, even when they have been developed into good guides, a camera is a '*dumme Geschichte*.' '*Dumm ist das Ding*' was, I am told, the comment of a famous Oberland guide, upon the photographic apparatus of one of the best mountain photographers for whom it chanced to be his duty one day to carry.

The snow was as hard as a wooden floor. We advanced rapidly over the region of hidden crevasses, just above the Felsen, without need for cautious inquiry as to the strength of their roofs. Beyond came the snow-slopes of the beautiful Monte Rosa glacier, where, when the snow is soft, fatigue awaits the aspiring traveller.

Every step of the way was familiar to me, for I have climbed Monte Rosa, in whole or in part, some eight times. On this occasion I was climbing it partly for the reader's sake, partly for the Gurkhas. There was little enough pleasure in the job. The top of the mountain-mass, which goes collectively under the name of Monte

Rosa, that is to say, 'Monte Roesse' or the 'Glacier Mountain,' is a long ridge with several peaks. The Nord End, as its name implies, is the most northerly and is on the frontier, then comes the highest point or Dufour Spitze.<sup>1</sup> The Zumstein Spitze follows and then the Signal Kuppe, where the two great ridges intersect and form what ought to be the culminating point of the mountain. The Dufour Spitze is eighty-five feet higher than the Nord End. So slight a difference is not worth mentioning. As the Nord End is but rarely climbed and occupies to my thinking a finer situation than its neighbour, I determined to make it our goal. The route to it had this further advantage that it was protected from the raging gale.

Accordingly, after mounting snow-slopes for an hour or so, we bore away to the left, into the heart of the Monte Rosa névé, instead of turning up to the right and climbing to the saddle, whence a rock- and snow-arête leads to the highest peak. The two highest summits are connected by a beautiful white ridge, called the Silber Sattel, the upper edge of a great snow-field, one of the loftiest in the Alps, where storms rage with unusual frequency, and the annual snow-fall is doubtless above the average. The Monte Rosa glacier drains this plateau. The descending névé breaks away in huge steps, each overhung by a wall of threatening ice. Avalanches break from these walls and their ruins encumber the slopes. The schrunds, ice-walls, and séracs of the Monte Rosa névé are some of the finest in Europe.

Our original intention was to climb first to the Silber Sattel and then to the Nord End, but we could not see a way through the great crevasses, so we turned instead up the mountain's face and made for its north

<sup>1</sup> Named after the great Swiss surveyor. The highest point of K<sup>2</sup> may similarly be called the Godwin-Austen peak, and the highest point of Gaurisankar the Everest Peak. It is not likely that cultivated races will be permanently content to call great and splendid mountains by the names, often uneuphonious, of individuals however meritorious.

ridge, a route I took many years ago in company with that excellent guide Ferdinand Imseng, who met his death shortly afterwards on the Macugnaga side of the same mountain. In three hours and a half from our breakfast place we reached the *bergschrund* at the foot of the face. It was not very quick going, but then we did not always choose the best route amongst the crevasses, and once we made a long descent below some tottering séracs, which would have been dangerous in the afternoon.

For a time the gale kept off the clouds. They remained high above the great peaks, and patches of blue sky were amongst them. The effect was wild and fine. As we crossed the *bergschrund* our spirits rose. 'In an hour,' said Aymonod, 'we ought to be on the top.' His axe went to work on the slope of hard snow, and step followed step in quick succession. At a pause, the word 'ice' came down the line. There was no mistake about it. It was as hard and blue as any I ever saw. Our rate of progress became slow in proportion. Each step had now to be hewn as out of rock. The higher we mounted the stronger blew the wind. It bore a freezing cloud of fresh fallen snow, wherewith it filled the steps as we quitted them. The cold became intense; the fitful sunshine was scarcely felt. Fortunately I was wearing a new pair of Zermatt-made boots, and for the first time in my life knew what it was to be warmly shod. Three thicknesses of leather over the foot form a real protection. I kept asking the men about their state and all assured me they were right; but doubtless it was at this time the frost caught Amar Sing, though he did not discover that his toes were frost-bitten till the evening. Hour passed after hour and we scarcely seemed to approach the gap for which we were making in the rock-ridge above. One guide relieved the other and then we sent Karbir ahead. He worked admirably and brought us so the top of the slope. Beyond the gap we emerged on to a snow-field, where the new snow was piled in

powdery drifts, up which we waded, after Amar Sing, to the sharp rock top.

There was no talk of halting for the view; there was little view to halt for. The Macugnaga valley below was one great cauldron of whirling mists, clouds were sweeping down towards us in massed battalions, and wreaths of snow were whirling about in tiny cyclones all around. We just passed over the peak, noticed that the hour was noon, and at once began the descent along the other ridge towards the Silber Sattel, judging that the slopes in that direction were of snow. We did not relish the idea of going down our ice staircase of a thousand steps, when each step would first have to be cleared of drifted snow. Moreover, we had seen a way through the crevasses which we judged would prove both safe and rapid.

Before descending far, we found that, though the slope was of snow, the snow was too hard to be trodden, so step-cutting began again. For an hour we made tantalisingly slow progress. The maze of crevasses was at our feet and there was our way visible through it; but it was an intricate way and I questioned whether we should find it in fog, whilst there seemed every probability that mist soon would envelop us. The clouds, passing over the landscape from Italy, were now coming in thicker ranks and at a continually lowering elevation. The Matterhorn was half buried in them. They were on the point of swallowing up all the higher levels. They poured over the Lyskamm, reached the crest of the Dufour peak, and began tearing down upon us. One moment the glacier below was like a map before us; the next it was utterly blotted out. We could barely see one another. The worst appeared to have come, yet Fortune was not utterly cruel. A slight change in the wind turned our glacier-valley into a draught-way for the gale, which rent the mists asunder and enabled us thenceforth to see far enough for our needs. We gained slopes where the axe was no longer required, and began

threading our way amongst the large crevasses. Cold kept the snow-bridges firm. We crossed one after another in quick succession. But a new danger awaited us. The fresh snow was piled by the wind into heavy drifts on various slopes, too steep to retain it in stable equilibrium. Just as we were about to cross one of these, there was a dull crack, followed by a muffled roar; the soft blanket peeled away and shot down to a lower level. We had again to cross such a slope, bordered below by an enormous schrund; we cut it at the narrowest place but paid for our passage by traversing immediately below *névé séracs*, some of which had recently fallen, whilst others, loaded with the fresh snow, seemed just about to fall. Here our only path was down an ice-gully, well-used as an avalanche-trough, and so to a firm bridge over the lowest of the great crevasses. No time was lost in this part of the descent till we rejoined our old tracks. With swift feet and light hearts we hurried along them over endless easy snow-slopes to the Felsen breakfast-place, where the rope could be laid aside. Seated in what now seemed good shelter we took a hasty and uncomfortable meal after eight hours of enforced abstinence. Then, but not till then, I discovered that the bitter cold had wrought an internal mischief in me, the effect of which was to last several days.

The storm continued to rage, but intermittently, and on the whole at high elevations. It was the beginning of prolonged bad weather and it took the peaks first. Not till the third day did it penetrate to the valleys and envelop them in its full fury, to the delight of the peasantry, who had been praying for rain. We watched the black clouds sweep over from Italy and stalk northwards, a whole series of them, following the Zinal ridge, each with white or dark skirt according as it was strewing hail or rain. When these had passed to the Bernese Oberland, a new series came over and cast hail upon us, before taking the line of the Saas Grat and vanishing northward in their turn, one behind the other. There

was no lightning, and as for rain and hail, little cared we about them. We descended as fast as my injured condition allowed, to the place where men were erecting the new hut, whence a series of stones and one or two red flags (*not* of Liberty), set up on the glacier, guided us along the track smoothed for the mules. Thus without further adventure we reached the old Riffelhaus, eighteen hours after setting out from it. I contented myself with descending for the night to the Riffelalp. The men went down to Zermatt. Thus ended a day which was, if you please, fatiguing and sometimes painful, but which left behind it an extraordinary stimulus. Such struggles with nature produce a moral invigoration of enduring value. They wash the mind free of sentimental cobwebs and foolish imagining. They bring a man in contact with cold stony reality and call forth all that is best in his nature. They act as moral tonics. Of all the time I have spent in the mountains, such days as these have possessed upon the whole the most enduring value.

*July 13, 14, 15.*

If the Matterhorn was inaccessible before, it became, of course, doubly so now. All hope of ascending it within the limits of time at our disposal had to be abandoned. We devoted a day to rest and recovery from the Monte Rosa chill, and during it FitzGerald rejoined us, after a fortnight's absence in various widely separated parts of Europe, on what he described, in a large and general fashion, as 'business.' We descended together by train to Visp, where clouds lay almost upon the church and rain extinguished the views. At such times Visp becomes cool and almost comfortable, so we remained there contentedly for a night.

Leaving by the first train we reached Gampel in half an hour. The others started on at once for Ried, whilst I sought a horse. The only procurable beast was old, sturdy, and opinionated. The saddle was mediævally cumbrous, the stirrups massive, the reins of bright green

webbing. Thus mounted I proceeded leisurely up the Lötschen valley, which reminded me topographically of Hunza. Gampel is its Gilgit, the Bietschhorn its Raki-pushi, Ried its Baltit, the Lötschenlücke its Hispar Pass. Rounding the foot of the Bietschhorn we entered the open and fertile upper valley, where villages succeed one another at close intervals. The unusually good houses are adorned with pious inscriptions in Gothic letters. Their tendency is Evangelical though the folk are Catholic. One or two downpours of rain overtook me before I entered the hostelry of Ried, so well known to an earlier generation of climbers. Latter-day mountaineers may still learn by a visit to this place what Zermatt and other great centres were like before the tourist invasion.

Towards sundown a wind from the north became master of the heavens and opened rifts in the clouds. The crags and brilliant snows of the Bietschhorn were revealed through a veil of bright mist and the mountains at the head of the valley displayed their fine drapery of new fallen snow.

## CHAPTER IX

### BERNESE OBERLAND

*July 16.<sup>1</sup>*

THE famous and beautiful mountain group, called the Bernese Oberland, perhaps the most beautiful group in the Alps, separates the cantons of Bern and Wallis and may be considered as consisting of two main and approximately parallel ranges. These are divided from one another by a long depression, interrupted at three points by low snow-passes, the Lötschenlücke, the Grünhornlücke, and the Oberaarjoch. The route from Ried to the Grimsel, over these three passes, traverses the whole extent of the Bernese Oberland and forms one of the finest snow-walks in Switzerland.

When we started from Ried, shortly after 4 A.M., to cross the Lötschenlücke, a north-east wind was blowing and clouds were hurrying with it over and about all the peaks, but they were light clouds of kindly aspect. If they occasionally dropped a shower, it was without settled intent to do us harm. All day long they kept closing merely to break again. They added to the beauty of the views and varied the monotony of long and slowly changing vistas.

The upper levels of the Lötschen valley possess the beauty proper to the borderland, where cultivated and wooded regions pass into grassy alps, broken by fallen stones and protruding rocks. Old trees, frantically grasping the uneven ground, form noble objects to stand

<sup>1</sup> Lötschenlücke. Left Ried at 4.15 A.M. Two hours to opposite the foot of the Distel glacier; one hour to breakfast by right bank of Lötschen glacier; one hour and a half up glacier to rocks below the Ahnengrat; one hour and a half to col; two hours and a half to the Concordia Hut.

before craggy and snow-enveloped peaks. The grass about them was brightened by recent showers. The sunlight shone in patches on the straight glacier ahead and vaguely glimmered through mists over the curving col.

On reaching the point where should have been, according to the old Dufour map, the end of the Lötschen glacier, we found it had retreated at least a kilometre. A large stony tract is in its place, already in process of invasion by grass and flowers. The Distel and Lötschen glaciers used to join; but the Distel glacier too has withdrawn its snout far up the southern hillside.

Discovering that Carrel was no longer with us, we sat down to await him. Karbir climbed a ruined tree, one of the last outposts of the forest, and shrieked in an inefficient falsetto 'Kar-rel! ah! Kar-rel!' but there was no answer. Aymonod, always easily anxious, ran about jodelling. When half an hour had been spent, Aymonod and Amar Sing were sent back to look for the truant, whilst we settled amongst alpine rhododendrons with melancholy fading blossoms. Another half hour passed, and we were concluding that a serious adventure must have happened, when the three men arrived together—Carrel in the midst, unconcerned as usual. He had merely crossed the stream and taken the path up the left bank, which was in fact the proper way. We should have discovered this and saved ourselves a lot of trouble if we had visited the Seiler inn at the Pfaffleralp, of whose existence, however, we were ignorant. When Carrel found we were not with him, instead of continuing his way to the glacier, where we could have seen him, and awaiting us there, he turned back, recrossed the river at the bridge, and came after us undisturbed in mind. There is a solid mass of imperturbability about Carrel that has its merit under certain circumstances, and for which he should be envied.

Our reconstituted party continued the march up the right bank of the valley, crossing below the foot of the retreating Jägi glacier and mounting the right bank of

the Lötschen glacier to a point where the alternatives were either to enter on the ice or to halt and breakfast. We breakfasted and watched veils of white mist waving about Breithorn and Bietschhorn, and revealing ice-edged blades of rock and white curtains of newly silvered snow. The valley below stretched away in unusual brilliancy of varied green.

It was raining a little, when we started on, about nine o'clock, but our confidence in the good intentions of the weather did not waver. The grand wall of mountains on our right often appeared, and the more picturesquely for the changeful cloud-drapery bedecking them. On our left was the broad ice-fall of the Ahnen glacier, whose séracs were dazzling with fresh snow. A fine varnish of the same clean substance was compacted with the rough surface of the ice under our feet. The further we advanced the thicker it became, till it was ankle-deep. As we put on the rope, the sun came out and poured a painful glory on the white landscape. The toil of wading through deep new snow was henceforward only once intermitted by a brief passage over some broken rocks below the Ahnen Grat. Aymonod sought out the many hidden crevasses with a patient and prolonged research, intended to be educational for the Gurkhas. The heat told on all and rendered our pace even slower than usual. Perspiration poured from Aymonod, blinding his dark glasses, and frosting over every hair of his face, so that he looked grey-skinned. A passing but considerable storm gathered behind and came creeping up the valley. It overtook us on the broad level col, so that falling snow obliterated the view. Descending a little way eastward for shelter, we seated ourselves on our packs to await the clearance which presently revealed the ample snow-fields and far-extending névé-tributaries of the Great Aletsch glacier, greatest amongst the glaciers of the Alps.

The buttress, whereon is situated the Concordia hut, was straight ahead down the white incline.

Its distance from us was only one-third greater than the extent of the Plaine Morte Glacier, which we crossed in an hour, but we toiled for two hours and a half down this descent, wading deep in snow, which we presently exchanged for a yet nastier slushy compound. The Finsteraarhorn was ahead, the Viescherhorn at our left; the Aletschhorn, gloriously white, rose splendidly on our right into the clouds. It was not however the peaks that held our attention, but the far-stretching plains of snow, the white ramifying valleys separated one from another by white ridges and all pouring down their snowy floods to the place of union by the Concordia, whence the ice-river, curving out of sight, sweeps south-westward in its large bend towards the valley of the Rhone. At the place of union, which is named *Place de la Concorde*, the broad glaciers came peacefully together, with no ruffling of their smooth surface where they meet. They melt one into another in apparent stillness and their onward flow is majestically calm. This union of many branches finds a parallel, on a yet larger scale, in the Baltoro glacier of the Karakoram-Himalayas; but there, though the volume of ice is vastly greater, there is not the same wonderful effect of breadth, for great mountains rise precipitously from the glaciers and narrow the aspect of the valleys. Here heights are small in proportion to breadths, and even the Jungfrau fails to compel the eye upwards. The vision wanders laterally, as over the surface of a lake with many bays, astonished at the wide extent of the pure snowy reservoir, and impressed with a feeling of eternal repose.

July 17.<sup>1</sup>

Our original plan for this day was to climb the Finsteraarhorn and cross the Oberaarjoch to the Grimsel;

<sup>1</sup> Jungfrau. Left Concordia hut at 2.30 A.M. Four hours up left side of Jungfrau Firn, and then left into a bay below the peak, and up snow-slope at its head to the Roththal Sattel; two hours (very slow) up arête to summit. Descent; half an hour to Sattel; two hours and three-quarters (with many halts) to the Concordia hut.



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but FitzGerald's fortnight in hot Italy had put him out of condition; the walk of the previous day had been unusually fatiguing, and he felt the need of repose. Accordingly I left him in the hut, sent off Carrel and Amar Sing to the Eggishorn for provisions, and started at 2.30 A.M. with Aymoned and Karbir to climb the Jungfrau.

When we first looked forth, the light from the lowering moon was decorating the view with sharply-edged bars of light and cones of shadow cast by the white hills; but the moon was gone by the time we started and only the lanterns of two parties, an hour and a half ahead, twinkled like orange stars on the vague floor. Silence reigned in the still air. Descending a gully full of loose stones, we entered the ice, and crossed the foot of the Grünhorn glacier, which we were to mount next day to the col at its head. The recently fallen snow upon the ice was not hard enough frozen to bear our weight, but this unpleasantness did not last, and, as we advanced below the foot of the Ewig Schnee Feld's broad ice-field and up the Jungfrau Firn's left side, the surface was firm and crisp beneath our feet. What beautiful names the mountains and glaciers have in this region—the Maiden, the Monk, the Ogre, the Dark Eagle Peak, the Bright Eagle, the Peak of Storms, the Peak of Terror, the Field of Everlasting Snow—how much better than Mount Jones or Mount Mackenzie!

The upper part of the Jungfrau Firn falls in swelling terraces from its encircling peaks and ridges. At each bend, open or covered crevasses are numerous and have to be carefully negotiated. Shrieks from one of the parties we left behind informed us that a man had fallen into a hole and was in process of being hauled out. There was no reason to shriek, and, indeed, every reason not to do so, for help was not required and we might easily have been betrayed into going back. As it was, we had to halt till we could be sure that they were continuing their way. Excitable novices are a nuisance on a mountain, especially when they are led, as in this case, by bad

guides. Good and careful guides seldom fall into crevasses. They discover and avoid them. The process takes a little time, but the discomfort of being hauled out of a crevasse is worth avoiding.

The first grey indication of dawn, rendering our lanterns needless, seemed to come up simultaneously all round the horizon. It was long before a bed of orange light gave colour to the sky in the south-east. When we reached the highest level of the glacier, some way below the Jungfrau Joch, and were bending round to the west, the Jungfrau suddenly blushed a faint pink over all its rocky face, then grew pale, blushed again, and finally, waxing golden, shone for some minutes in singular glory before white daylight reigned. Aymonod was unusually happy all the morning. His love of glacier-scenery found continual satisfaction. 'What beauty! what beauty!' he kept exclaiming; 'is it not a pleasure to walk thus? There is indeed no difficulty for a climber here, but difficulty is not everything. Look at the Aiguilles of Chamonix, for example; they are difficult enough, but as points of view they are miserable. Here, look where we may, there is beauty on every side.'

Few ascents in the Alps are simpler than that of the Jungfrau from the south for people who understand mountains. There is none better worth making. Immediately south of the peak is a snowy saddle, called the Roththal Sattel, and south of that again the Roththalhorn, a rocky hump, which sends a snow-ridge eastward into the glacier. Between this snow-ridge and the north-east ridge of the Jungfrau there is hidden a deep bay or theatre, with walls and floor of purest snow: a lovely retreat where some glacier fairy dwells, uncumbered by views of the lower world. Ice cliffs impend on either hand and occasionally cast down avalanches. A steep slope at the end leads up to the Roththal Sattel, and I should think that sometimes this slope may be in dangerous condition, when the ascent or descent might better be made by the aforesaid white ridge, which can

easily be reached both from the Sattel and the névé below. I understand that, in some years, this is the route generally followed by the Eggishorn guides.

We pounded our way up the slope, crossed a *bergschrund* at the top of it by a good snow-bridge, and so gained a little snowy plateau, just below the Roththal Sattel and protected from the north-west wind that was blowing on the actual col. We made our first halt at this point, after four hours' easy walking from the hut, and were perfectly happy and comfortable. The whole day was before us; the scenery was superb. Higher up there would be wind. As Aymonod had made the steps so far, I decided that the guides of the other parties should cut them up the arête. We halted for two hours to let them pass, and then made the mistake of following too soon. Our fellow climbers were not experienced, and their guides, doubtless wisely, cut for them a staircase of deep ledges like armchairs. Such step-cutting, in blue ice, was necessarily slow. We followed impatiently, restrained by Aymonod's good manners from cutting round and snatching the first place again. The method of progress of one of our companions was this. His leading guide, having enlarged to a preposterous size the already large steps made by the first party, sat down and hoisted his employer up to him by the rope. He then went forward five steps, repeated the process, and so on. At last we reached the crest of broken rocks close to the summit, and in a few moments were on the top, with a cold breeze freezing the marrow of our bones. We only halted long enough to fasten in the memory the small remainder of the view which had not been visible from the arête.

The Jungfrau's panorama is one of the most famous in the Alps, and in some respects its fame is deserved. The distant view is excellently composed, for the great ranges visible are concentrated into groups. Mont Blanc looks surpassingly fine and of more imposing magnitude than from many a nearer summit. A panorama, however, depends much on the nature of the foreground for its

effect, for the foreground occupies nine-tenths of the visible area. A glance at the map would suggest that the Jungfrau is singularly favoured in this respect, for it stands at the edge of the region of lakes and wooded hills whereof Interlaken is the centre, whilst on the other side it appears to look down the greatest of Alpine glaciers. Unfortunately, as a minuter examination of the map reveals, in neither of these respects is it entirely blessed. Its own protruding shoulders, the Silberhorn on the one hand and the Schneehorn on the other, prevent the sight from plunging into the Vale of Lauterbrunnen and cut off a part of the Wengern Alp, whilst southward the Aletsch glacier is so placed that its length and splendour are disguised. The position of the peak awakens expectations which it fails to satisfy. The climber hopes to look down a splendid series of precipitous snow and ice slopes, into a deep and fertile valley, to behold blue lakes beyond, and then wooded hills rolling away to a remote distance. On the other side he expects to command the finest névé basin in the Alps and to trace a great ice-river pouring from it. Such a view would be of unusual beauty. But the plunge is not there. The lakes are for the most part hidden, whilst the snowy area is indifferently seen, the near mountains are badly grouped and of undignified forms, and the ice-river vanishes round a corner far too soon. Perhaps the view from the Mönch is better, though I suspect that there the Trugberg interrupts the sublime simplicity of the Aletsch glacier's curve.

We were the first to begin the descent. We rattled down the easy staircase in half an hour to the sack we left below. A melancholy interest attaches to the lower portion of the arête, for it was hereabouts that a sad accident occurred in July 1887 whereby six young Swiss climbers lost their lives.<sup>1</sup> Wonder has often been ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Das Unglück an der Jungfrau vom 15. Juli 1887*, by F. Becker and A. Fleiner (Zürich). In the descent the party bore, by mistake, to the left, when some way down the arête, and so came on to the steep east face of the mountain. They fell down a conspicuous couloir north of the main snow-slope that leads up to the Roththal Sattel.

pressed in my hearing that it should be possible for a man to lose his life on the Jungfrau, but I confess to seeing nothing wonderful about it. The slopes are in places very steep. Parts of them were ice when we were there, and good ice-steps are not easy for inexperienced men to cut. Sometimes the same slopes will be of rotten snow. They are liable to be swept by tremendous blasts, especially from the snowy quarter, the south-west, and such a storm was raging when death visited this region. A bad slip even on the ridge would be hard to recover unless the rope were properly handled, and the unfortunates were not only numbed by spending a night on the peak, but wandered out of the right way. I watched one of the two parties of three descending after us, and marvelled that they got down safely. The employer was slipping and straining on the rope for the whole hour or more of his descent to the col. He came down in a sitting position and the guide behind supported half his weight whilst the leader yet again remade the steps. Aymonod was full of sympathy for his colleagues. 'What a martyrdom it is to be tied to a man like that!' he kept exclaiming. 'It puts an end to the pleasure of climbing. All the beauty of this fine scenery must be destroyed for that guide.'

The fact is, that one of the greatest dangers of the Alps is due to the careless chatter of experienced climbers. They talk of ascents as safe and easy, which may be so indeed for them, if they have inherited the requisite aptitude and added to it experience and acquired skill, or if they habitually supply their own deficiencies with the abounding power of excellent guides. But let three inexperienced lowland amateurs, starting from the Concordia hut duly roped, blunder with their rope loose up the Jungfrau Firn. Let them by good fortune not happen simultaneously upon one of the hidden crevasses, which are so arranged that it is easy to come upon them in the direction of their length. Let them find the slope up to the saddle in a dangerously rotten condition, or

the arête rotten or icy. Let a gale catch them on the exposed ridge, or fog disfigure the way. The chances, I think, are against their success and in favour of a fatal termination to their enterprise. The self-same expedition, made under the same circumstances by experienced men, or by strong and active men with experienced guides, would be as safe as a walk up Bond Street, but it is foolish to speak of it as such to the general and still more to the youthful public, who do not understand the implied definition of terms.

Our descent from the col to the hut was a featureless grind. We minimised the toil through the soft snow by going as slowly as we pleased, halting sometimes to drink at pools or runlets of ice-cold water, sometimes to smoke a pipe and give ourselves to the enjoyment of the beautiful scenery, whereof one is apt to become oblivious in the hot hours of afternoon. We reached the hut after two hours and a half of leisurely walking, and found FitzGerald still deep in a refreshing sleep and Larden long ago returned from a successful but cold ascent of the Finsteraarhorn. Our men, returning from the Eggishorn, brought the materials for soup and other creature comforts.<sup>1</sup> We retired early to our bed-shelf and a good night's rest, which was, truth to tell, not unpleasantly disturbed by the rattle of hail on the roof over our heads.

*July 18.*<sup>2</sup>

When two o'clock came, the hour at which we ought to have started for the Finsteraarhorn, the weather was so bad that the subject of starting was not even mentioned. The outlook was little improved at half-past five, when

<sup>1</sup> It is only fair to state that these provisions were excellent and cheap. The landlord of the Eggishorn had us at his mercy and might have 'done' us. He treated us well, and the fact deserves recognition.

<sup>2</sup> Oberaarjoch. Left Concordia at 5.40 A.M. One hour, forty minutes to Grünhornlücke; one hour and three-quarters to angle of junction of Viescher and Studer glaciers; two hours and three-quarters (very slow) to South and over rock-crest to North Oberaarjoch; two hours down to foot of Oberaar glacier; a quarter of an hour to Oberaarhütte; one hour and a half by left bank of Oberaar stream and right bank of united stream to the Grimsel.

we started for the Grimsel, determined to face whatever storms might rage. I had fair confidence that no serious trouble was in store, for the wind came from the north-west, and the clouds, though large and many, were broken and not heavy. They swept over our heads and covered all the peaks; the wind howled about us; a damp mist crawled up the glacier, whilst the snow looked leaden beside the jag-edged rocks. Descending to the ice we found the snow upon it soft and slushy. In most years May is the month of melting for winter snow, but this year the heavy snow-fall came late and lingered long on the ground. Thus the region of glaciers, usually bare of snow, was covered with a foot or two of soft slush, beneath which a layer of water flowed or slowly soaked away. Nowhere was this disagreeable phenomenon more marked and unpleasant than in the neighbourhood of the Concordia hut, where for a mile or so in every direction one had to wade wet snow instead of walking upon clean ice.<sup>1</sup>

Turning up the Grünhorn glacier towards the easy col at its head, we presently came to firm névé where the walking was good. Carrel led in his deliberate fashion, searching for crevasses and never crossing one till he had investigated it in detail. Near the col we entered a patch of dazzling and scorching sunlight, for the sun, which was shining nowhere else, blazed upon us as on cloudy days it sometimes will. From the white and level top of the pass, a branch of the Viescher glacier dipped gently to the main ice-stream. The Finsteraarhorn rose straight in front with a long craggy ridge stretching down to the south-east and ending in one of the many Rothorns of the Alps. If we had been rightly informed as to the way, we should have mounted to the Rothhorn saddle, just north-west of the Rothhorn, saving a long détour by a short climb. But the weather seemed to be clearing, and it was for the time undoubtedly pleasanter to walk down hill and round the foot of this

<sup>1</sup> I am told that slush is more generally met with at this point than I supposed.

ridge, trusting to luck that the ascent of the Studer Firn on the other side would be easy. In all directions the views were magnificent, and even the smaller peaks looked fine, each rising out of a corolla of shining mist. Mists, too, crawled about the glacier floor, and, fitfully enveloping us, gave a faëry unreality to vistas partly revealed through their gossamer depths.

We could be careless about the immediate future, for a bulging mass of séracs hid both our pass and the way to it. As none of us knew anything about the route, save what an indifferent map implied, we had no foundation for anxiety. Deciding to fetch a compass round the far end of the séracs, we ate our breakfast leisurely, praising the viands of the Eggishorn and more especially the wine. Aymonod, who has all the spirit of a connoisseur, described it as '*un vin chic, vieux de trois ans,*' and proceeded to discourse upon it at length. He had no difficulty in recognising the cheese as Fontine, the work, as he said, of a cheesemaker who knew his business.

Why we dawdled as we did this day was a mystery, even at the time, for the weather was evidently unsettled, nor was slowness our worst error. Having lazily shirked the Rothhorn pass, it became a point of honour not to make any unnecessary ascent; so, to avoid some trifling undulations, we kept far away to the right, a toilsome and fatuous détour, which had the further disadvantage of preventing us from gaining a view of the Oberaarjoch and its approaches. At the head of the Oberaar glacier are two snow saddles, divided from one another by a crest of rock about five hundred feet high. We ought to have passed below these rocks and mounted straight to the northern saddle—the true Oberaarjoch.<sup>1</sup> Traversing round, as we did, we came instead almost on to the southern col,

<sup>1</sup> The southern col should be called the Southern Oberaarjoch, but is known by the bungling name Oberaar-Rothhornjoch. Attention was first called to it by Mr. Wethered, under the name Kastenjoch.

and should in fact have saved ourselves trouble if we had crossed it and chanced on the right way down the other side.<sup>1</sup>

As we were casually promenading round the upper levels of the Studer Firn, a change was progressing in the heavens behind us of which we were not aware. All day long there had been plenty of clouds about, and rain had fallen at intervals, but now the clouds were packing themselves densely together and sweeping up from the south-west. A storm of determined character was at hand. Close to the true Oberaarjoch is a hut where we might have sheltered from the storm. Unfortunately we were near the other pass when the storm reached over to us. Once involved in clouds, the hut was not easily discoverable, for our knowledge about its position was of the vaguest. We raced to climb over the crest of rocks dividing us from the other saddle. The black cloud caught us and blotted out the solid world as we were skurrying up a couloir. We felt our way to the crest and down its rotten northern face, where the large stones rattled off from under our feet in a profusion that was really wasteful. A rift in the clouds showed the flat saddle close at hand and even a portion of the easy glacier descending from it to the east, but no hut came within our range of vision.<sup>2</sup>

It was always a standing wonder to Aymonod when I brought him at the end of a day to the place we intended to reach. None of us had previously taken any of the routes we followed this year, so that all our guiding was by the map—a thing in which the guides had no faith. If I said ‘that is our col,’ or ‘that is our peak and such and such is the way up it,’ Aymonod’s reply was generally ‘*peut-être*’; he seldom went so far as ‘*probable-*

<sup>1</sup> There are immense ice-walls which seem to bar the descent from this col to the Oberaar glacier, but they can be easily turned by keeping steadily along to the right under the Oberaar-Rothhorn.

<sup>2</sup> The hut can be reached from the pass in eight minutes by going west and bearing to the left to a rocky spur over which a track leads to it. The hut is small but well situated.

ment.' When I informed him that we were actually on the Oberaarjoch he was openly incredulous, and the more so because the promised hut did not appear. It was too much trouble to look for it in the storm, so we turned straight down the Oberaar glacier and presently emerged into daylight. About a mile down we found a fragment of cut firewood on the ice, and only then did Aymonod agree that after all we might be on the right way. The descent was uneventful and the scenery dull, save for the fine ice-cliffs on our right. Near the foot of the glacier were countless lady-birds grouped on stones and even on the ice itself.

In due season we quitted the ice and came in twenty minutes to the Oberaar Hütte, where a shepherd lives during the summer to look after a herd of oxen and sheep. He came forth to meet us and we took shelter in his windowless chalet from the rain that had now set in to fall for thirty-six hours. On the whole it was well that we did not search out the refuge on the col.

The shepherd was full of talk. 'This alp,' he began, 'is in the Canton Bern, but it does not belong to any village of Bern.' 'No! it belongs to Törbel above Stalden,' I replied, innocently hoping to surprise him with a little local knowledge. But he was not in the least surprised. Törbel was the centre of the world to him, and a full knowledge of its affairs easily imputed to all men.

Several years ago I happened to be on the way from Visp to S. Niklaus for the fifth time in a single month—a good excuse for riding. My muleteer, one Ignatz Kalbermatten, proved an unusually intelligent companion, and his conversation so interested me that I made notes of it at the time, not dreaming that they would be of future service. I questioned him about the traditions of his village, Törbel, and about the names of the old families in it. He was a mine of local memories. After telling me of the *Wasserleiter*, which brings water from

the Augstbord Pass, and how the instrument of its foundation still remains in force and works without hitch, he said: 'The leading men of Törbel in old days must have been far-seeing folk, for the arrangements they made were good and we continue to derive benefit from many of them. For example we have an alp, far away in Canton Bern, above the Grimsel, which has belonged to Törbel for a very long time. I don't know how long, but certainly some hundreds of years. If you like I will tell you the story, as it was told me, about how that alp came into our possession.

'You must know that it used to be the custom for the men of our village to go over into Bern once a year for purposes of trade. They used to go and return by the Grimsel. It happened one day that four of our leading men were coming home from Bern. On their way they stopped for food at an inn in Obergestelen. As they sat there drinking each his glass of wine, they overheard a conversation between the headmen of Obergestelen and a lady who was baroness in those parts. It was about an alp, which the baroness was willing to sell. The men after a time rose and left, saying, "The price you ask is too high." It was not really a high price, but the men hoped to get the alp yet cheaper, knowing the lady's necessities. When they had left, our men entered into conversation with the lady and asked about the alp, and she told them all they desired to know. The end was that they there and then agreed to buy it. The others presently returned, and when they heard that the bargain was concluded they were beside themselves with anger. For, you must know, it was a good bargain. Our men not only bought the alp but purchased it free from all dues whatever. They purchased the land and the sovereignty over it. This was quite recently proved when the authorities of Canton Bern tried to tax the alp, and we refused to pay. The matter was tried in the law-courts and we won our case. When our men came home they called a meeting of the village together and

the village gladly took the bargain off their hands; for, though we had a fine alp for cows and goats, we had no pasture for sheep, oxen, and horses. But there was a great deal of trouble to be gone through before we could enter into peaceable occupation of our property, for the men of Obergestelen raised the people of the Rhone valley against us. No one would let us pen our herds for the night in their village on the way from Törbel to the alp. At length, however, we purchased the needful rights at suitable halting-places on the way, and since then there has been no more bother. Every year, at the beginning of the summer, we send men up with the herd and one stays with the beasts. By October they are all home again. The grass at our alp is excellent. If a mule or a young horse is turned out there for one summer he becomes greatly strengthened. This mule, Fritz, that you are riding, was turned out there. To my thinking he is the best mule in the Zermatt valley. It is thanks to our alp if he is so.'

This conversation came back to my memory in presence of the Törbel herdsman. I asked him if he knew Kalbermatten. 'You must mean Ignatz Kalbermatten,' he said. 'Oh yes! of course I know him. He is one of the most sensible (*vernünftig*) men in our village. So he told you that his mule was turned out here, did he? That must have been some years ago, for we no longer bring horses or mules here. We had so many accidents with them; they kept falling over the cliffs—every year one or two. There are many precipices in this place, so that it is impossible to avoid accidents with young and skittish animals. The oxen are more careful of themselves, and sheep of course go anywhere.'

As rain continued to fall with steadily increasing volume there was nothing gained by delay. The herdsman, who had to go some way down to fetch wood for his fire, acted as our guide and showed the way to a cleverly constructed bridge in a narrow gorge near his hut, which we might easily have missed. A picturesque but giddy

track conducted us along the left bank of the valley-stream to the foot of the stony Unteraar glacier, whence a foot-path, newly constructed by the Swiss Alpine Club, by the right bank of the infant Aar, leads to the Grimsel hotel, where we joined a houseful of tourists, wet to the skin like ourselves.

*July 19, 20, 21.*

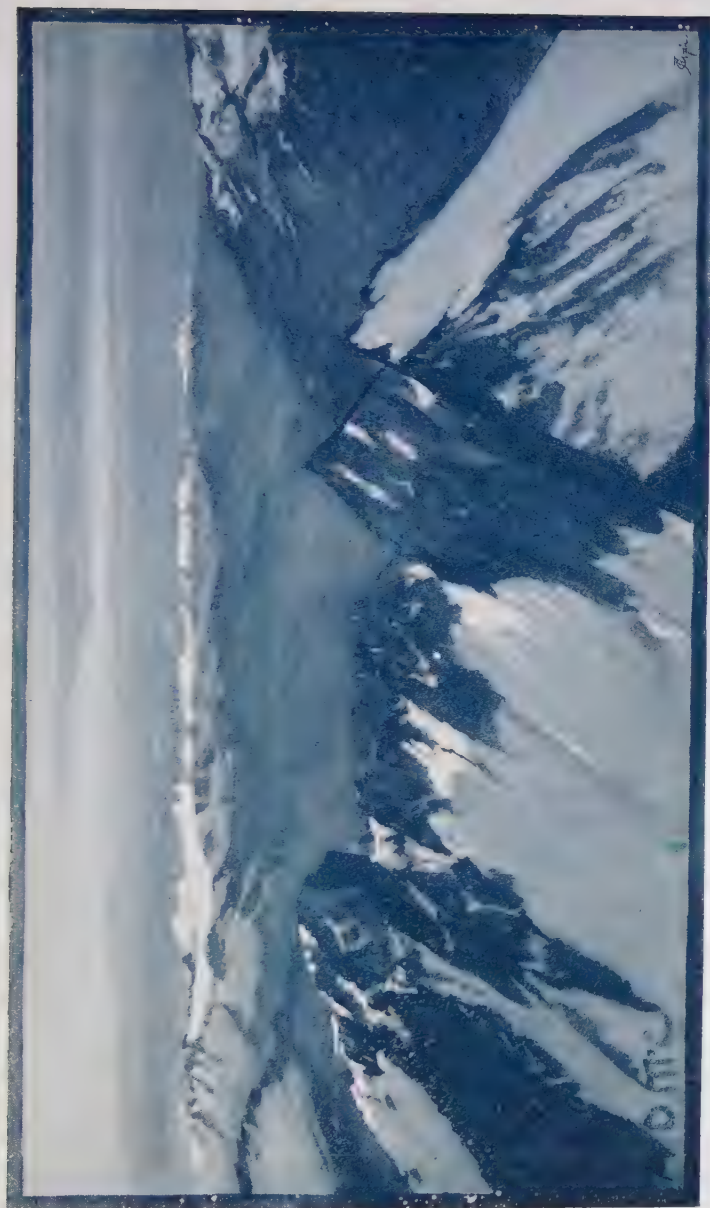
The next day was under any circumstances to be one of rest. The weather continued bad. Clouds hung upon the house and rain fell with little cessation. It was amusing to see the tourists wrap themselves in their waterproofs, buckle on their packs, and start resignedly forth for their day's march. They seemed to be under orders to move on, whatever the weather might do. Men and women, forth they went into the wet, leaving us alone with a priest from Lugano, who was acting as chaplain for the month to the Venetian workmen employed on the road. All day long I sat writing in my room and the hours passed swiftly. When night came, my only fear was that the morning would be fine and we should have to start for Göschenen in the small hours. We ought, in fact, so to have started, but the guides, perhaps divining my mood, decided not to wake us, and we did not find it in our hearts to blame them, even when the sunny morning looked through the window and asked why we lagged behind.

No doubt one would soon grow tired of the Grimsel, but for an off-day it is not without charm. Few places in the Alps better deserve the epithet 'wild.' But what are the qualities that go to make up wildness? That was the question I kept asking myself. Every one admits that the Grimsel is wild. What makes it so? Not the absence of human activity, for it was alive with men making a road. Four times daily at fixed hours blasting took place, and a series of explosions re-echoed finely amongst the hills, whilst the sprung rocks leapt high into the air and came rattling down the slopes. The upper regions of snow, when the sun shines and the

sky is clear, do not convey to a sympathetic beholder any sense of wildness. They are remote, solemn, perhaps severe, but wild they are not, in the sense that the Grimsel is wild. About the Grimsel there is plenty of grass; there are roads and footpaths; there are two beautiful lakes; there are houses; whilst roaring torrents and precipitous gorges, the usual means employed by nature to impose dread upon man, are not in sight. What then causes the indubitable wildness of the scene? Partly, I imagine, it arises from the dark colour of the landscape, partly from the absence of trees, partly from the fact that though there is plenty of grass there are no large areas of it, only strips and ledges, divided from one another by protruding rock, smoothed under the action of ancient glaciers. The lakes are dark, whether you look into their depths, or behold the hillsides reflected from the calm surface. The bending round of the deep valley gives it an appearance of isolation and makes of it a hollow place, floored with lakes and walled with darkness. Add to this the unwonted display of the traces of glacier action, the unusual smoothness of the visible rock, down which it seems that whatever is started must roll to the waters below, and the peculiarity and force of the undeniable effect is sufficiently accounted for.

Towards evening a restlessness came upon us. The fine weather, the moonlight, perhaps too the excessive costliness of the hotel, combined to urge us onward. We yielded to the moment's mood, packed our things took a light supper, and before midnight started on our further way.<sup>1</sup> We crossed the lakes by a temporary

<sup>1</sup> Galenstock (3597 m. 11,802 ft.). Left the Grimsel at 11.30 P.M. Two hours and a half up Nägelisgräthli path to right bank of Rhone glacier; crossed glacier in half an hour and climbed easy snow in one hour to col south of Galenstock; followed arête for one hour and a half to top of peak; descended north arête for a few yards, turned east down a great couloir by side of which the Tiefen névé was reached in one hour and a quarter; three-quarters of an hour across névé and up easy couloir to the Gletschjoch; one hour and a quarter down left side of difficult couloir to *bergschrund*; three-quarters of an hour over Dammafirn; three-quarters of an hour to Göscheneralp inn; two hours and a half to Göschenen.



THE RHONE VALLEY FROM THE TOP OF THE GALENSTOCK



wooden bridge and found the path or staircase leading up to the Nägelisgrätli. Once found, it conducts plainly through the labyrinth of rocks and grass patches that form the hillside, but any one coming in the reverse direction might easily miss it, and (as once happened here to Professor Tyndall) go astray and be cut off by the successive precipices that bar the descent.

When we came into the bright moonlight and could extinguish our lantern, there was more pleasure in walking. The value of the grass was black against the white granite stones that dotted it about. Snow patches became numerous as we approached the broad and leveller place above. The view widened; there was a sense of space, a relief from the imprisonment of the last two days. Mountain-masses appeared in various directions, with peaks upon them. Even the great Finsteraarhorn now looked a mere detail, a culminating point upon a mighty mound. The clouds held moonlight within them, and the denser atmosphere of the valleys, blue and purple by day, was a soft transparent white. For foreground there were little lakes in rocky beds, great boulders left anywhere by the glaciers in their retreat, low ice-worn domes or slopes of rounded rock, and patches and stripes of hard snow in curious hollows.

Thus, walking eastwards, we crossed the back of a wide ridge, and entered the valley of the Rhone glacier, far above the top of the ice-fall, so well-known to travellers who have driven over the Furka Pass. We bore round gradually to the north across a slope, packed over with broken rocks, and down them to the right bank of the glacier, where it begins to spread back to its ample snow-field, now looking blanched and larger in the moonlight.

We sat down on a great rock, as much to waste time as anything, and looked abroad over the view. The air had been warm on the rocky hillside; here it grew sharp and eager, rousing us to action. Frost held in its firm grip the water that had begun to escape on the previous

day, so that the surface of the glacier glittered, and flashed sparkles of moonlight at us as we passed. It was now that the beauty of the white Galenstock attracted us. Giving up our intention of ascending the Dammastock, we turned off and climbed long slopes of frozen snow towards the col immediately south of the Galenstock. We crossed large crevasses by bridges firm as rock, and looked into a lovely grotto, roofed with a vault of glittering icicles. The starry Bull seemed tossing the Pleiades over the col, but that was the last of night's splendours. Blackness began to fade from sky and shadow, and pale blue reigned in its stead. On reaching the saddle and looking toward the east, we beheld a streak of orange dawn behind a distant crest of hills which rose from a series of cloud-ridges, faint and fair to look upon. A magnificent wall of rock, plumb-vertical, was on our left, ending upwards in splinters, needle sharp, upon one of which stood Jupiter and Venus in close conjunction. The moon-shadows faded altogether away in the diffused light, but air perspective was unusually marked, and distances manifested their relation by grades of varying softness. The Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn, facing east, reflected the pale dawn more fully than the other mountains and stood out bold and solid before their ghostly and uncertain fellows. Presently we noticed that the cold aspect of night was gone, and the pale snows were become less pallid. Purple was creeping down into the valley depths. We climbed northward, along a ridge of easy rocks towards our peak.

At five o'clock we halted, under shelter from the cold breeze, to watch with undivided attention the moment of the birth of day. In the east a series of increasing splendours succeeded one another; but, for me, south-westward lay the chief fascination, where, behind the Pennines and Mont Blanc, still pale and faint, a wide curtain of pink light was slowly descending over the blue sky. The interval between its sharply defined lower edge and the summits of the mountains grew less and less.

When it vanished, peak after peak glowed with the red dawn, and the sun looked upon us also over some remote pass, as from a door opened into the world of fire. We turned our backs upon his dazzling brilliancy, and there, right opposite to him, somewhat south of west on the far horizon, appeared a radiant fan of pink rays, streaming upward from a point, sharp and bright—a counterdawn, that travelled northwards and faded, as the sun went south and waxed full. When all his broad light shone over a sea of cloud, that formed the roof of Italy, and only the Rhone valley at our feet remained in shade, the day was begun and we moved forward to its work.

The cold wind and shadow tried us severely during the three-quarters of an hour of step-kicking and step-cutting that took us to the summit of the Galenstock. The view thence was fine, though the light, shining straight on the Oberland, rendered its peaks flat and uninteresting. The Pennines are particularly well seen from this point, for they break into two groups with the Matterhorn standing solitary between them. The Valtournanche men regard the Matterhorn as specially their own. 'See,' said Aymonod, 'how our mountain always maintains its dignity!' To-day, however, the charm of the view lay to the south and eastward under the sun; for in the south the low Italian and Ticino hills, bathed in soft atmosphere and transparent mist, were playing hide-and-seek with floating lines and balls of changeful cloud; and eastward the shaded ranges in long ranks, one behind another, formed backgrounds to the various tinted air, through which, each, remoter than the ridge before, looked more soft and ethereal, till the last led fitly to the sky.

Our intention was to descend the northern ridge of the Galenstock to the Tiefensattel; but, when we had gone a few steps along it, we were attracted by a steep couloir at our feet, leading straight to the Tiefen glacier. A couloir is a gully (such as all steep rock-faces must

become seamed with) filled with a ribbon either of snow or ice. Couloirs are, at certain times, the pathway of avalanches, or more continuously of fragments of stone or ice. At the head of this couloir was a great snow-cornice, which kept discharging missiles. We avoided them and the chance of stones by remaining on the rocks to the left of the couloir. These were in places difficult, owing to their looseness and the accumulation of new snow upon them, but in something over an hour we were down and had crossed the *bergschrund*, or long crevasse, a specimen of which is at the foot of all couloirs and steep snow or ice slopes that lie against rocks.

We had now only to traverse the snow-field of the Tiefen glacier and climb another short and easy couloir to reach a little col in the ridge between the Tiefenstock and Gletschhorn, whereby we intended to gain access to the Dammafirn at the head of the Göschenen valley. In the rocks near the foot of this second couloir there was once found a hole filled with splendid crystals, worth, it is said, as much as 70,000 francs. Such finds of crystals are made from time to time in this region and every peasant has tales to tell of some discoverer luckily enriched.

Our pass, which is called the Gletschjoch, is a jag in a peculiar and precipitous ridge, built of huge vertical slabs of rock, set at right angles to the direction of the ridge and ending above in sharp points and blades. We approached the col not without excitement, for there seemed every indication that the descent on the far side would be steep. On looking over, our worst anticipations were realised. A long and rapid couloir leads from it to the crevassed Winter glacier, and this couloir was grooved with numerous deep tracks of falling stones, besides being sliced across at the foot by a huge *bergschrund*. All the grooves cut through the snow to the hard ice beneath. Only a band, about a yard wide, on the extreme left, leaning against a smooth and practically vertical wall of rock, could be safely descended, and it

consisted partly of rotten snow and partly of very hard ice compacted with fallen stones. We descended by this band with the greatest care, sometimes finding a grip in the rocks on our left, and sometimes good foothold by jamming the foot in between the rocks and the ice. At one point the ice bent up and was reduced to a mere wall, six inches thick, separating the rocks from the chief groove for the falling stones. We were about to venture into the groove when it was swept by a swishing avalanche. Below this point matters improved. Though still in some danger from falling stones we could take to the rocks. By them, where the gully broadened out, we bore round leftward on the face of the mountain to the foot of a buttress dividing ours from a second couloir where the *bergschrund* bent up against the rocks, so that we could jump it and emerge safely on the snow-field.

The descent provided no further incident. By bearing away to the east we avoided the great crevasses. A series of short glissades carried us down to the stone-covered Winter glacier, where there were again a quantity of lady-birds on the stones. A *débris* staircase and a couple of bridges led from the glacier's foot to the new and charming little inn at Göscheneralp. We halted to lunch and stayed for afternoon-tea, whilst the guides slept in the sun, face downwards on the grass, each with his boots at his head. FitzGerald, less comfortably, snored in a straight-backed chair and then walked in his sleep to another, from which I saved him from falling. He awoke, as a dead man might come to life, and declared he had not been to sleep at all. In the cool of the day we sauntered by green meadow-basins and a gorge, rich in woods and cascades, to Göschenen, with its big railway station, yawning tunnel-mouth, and many hotels.

## CHAPTER X

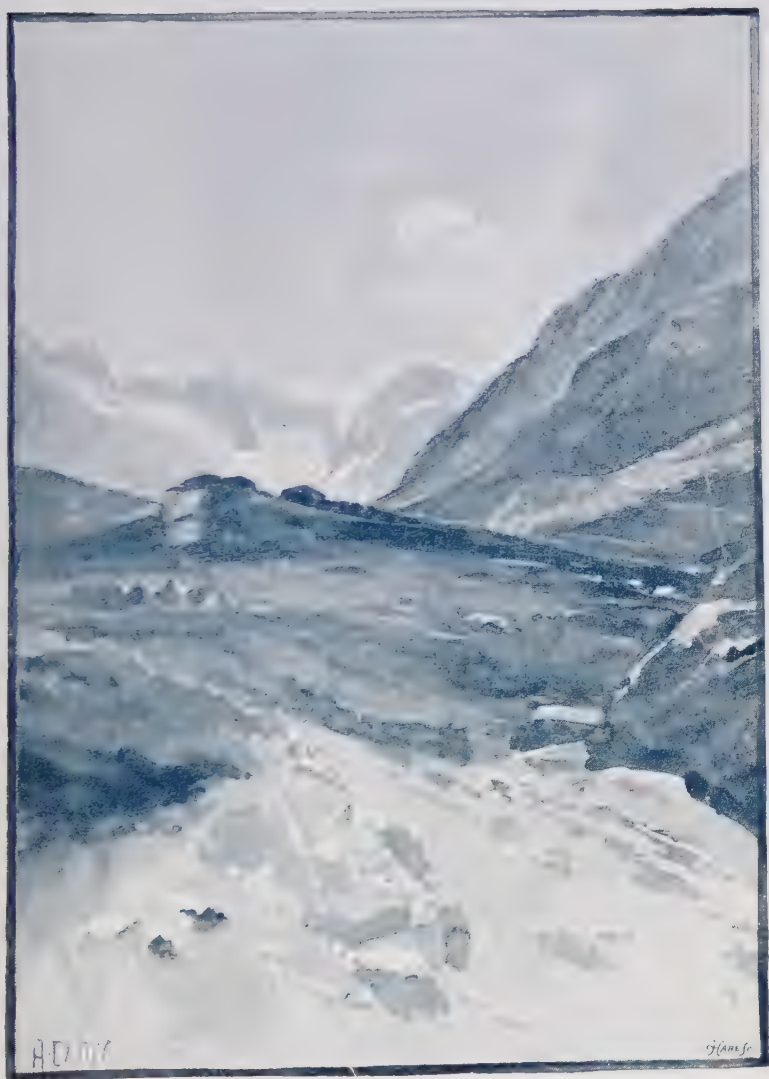
### URI AND GLARUS

July 22, 23, 24.

FORESEEN circumstances involved one day's halt at Göschenen, but fortune, or ill-luck, decreed a second. Karbir and Aymonod were both taken ill. Karbir thought it was the devil inside him and Aymonod allowed it was cold. Both refused their food, which was probably the best thing they could do—such, at any rate, was the innkeeper's opinion, whose pocket it suited, for they were all *en pension*. After noon on the second day our invalids left their beds and were ready to move. We sent some one to make inquiries at the station, and learned that a train would pass in an hour's time.

When, without protest on the ticket-clerk's part, we had taken tickets for Amsteg and were in the train, hurrying down the inclines at swinging speed, the conductor informed us that it was an express and did not stop at Amsteg. Fancy a Swiss train passing a station without stopping! We alighted at Erstfeld, where the mountain engines are taken off, and took refuge in a café from the heat and flies. The men walked away towards Amsteg; we followed with the baggage in a vehicle. The kindly host at the old Hôtel Stern made us comfortable for the night, and we slept so well that it was nine o'clock next morning before we were on the road.

We still nourished ideas of catching up with the lost day, but the heat that presently overtook us in the beautiful Maderanerthal reduced us to reason. We halted, on one excuse and another, half-a-dozen times,



THE GLETSCHJOCH FROM NEAR GÜSCHENERALP



now lying by a gurgling brook, now in some glade, between whiles bolting across the hot stretches where the sun reigned. We made a long pause at a half-way restaurant, presided over by a girl of fifteen, who did her best to entertain us with her slowly spoken school-German. Her *patois* would have been more musical. It will be a poor result of education if it planes away dialects.

Arriving at the Swiss Alpine Club hotel, we still, I believe, had some lingering idea that we were going on the same evening to the hut by the Hüfi glacier, but an hour or two of idleness in the shade, and the sight of a number of idle folk, sufficed to reduce our energy. When we ought to have been starting we were engaging bedrooms, thus finally burying the lost day without apology or regret.

*July 25.*

The night was so unusually warm that a foreign gentleman, whose nationality the reader must divine, was compelled to get out of bed and open his window—such at any rate was the almost incredible tale he related to his horrified compatriots at the early breakfast-table! At half-past five o'clock we turned our backs on the pleasant well-victualled hotel, and took a down-hill path to the river-bank.<sup>1</sup> The warm air made me so dull and unimpressionable that I have nothing to say about the pretty cascades and woods, for which the upper part of the Maderanerthal is famed. A fine view opened over the

<sup>1</sup> Gurkha Pass (2856 m. = 9371 ft.), Piz Gurkha (3063 m. = 10,050 ft.), and Piz Valpintga (2962 m. = 9718 ft., 2938 m. = 9640 ft.). *July 25.*—Left the Maderanerthal Hôtel at 5.30 A.M. Two hours to the Hüfi hut; three-quarters of an hour to the glacier; one and a half hours up the glacier and easy snow, and finally a few rocks to the Gurkha Pass. Here the party divided. FitzGerald, Carrel, and Amar Sing turned west and followed the ridge, climbing both peaks of Piz Valpintga; the rest turned east, and climbed an easy rock arête in thirty-five minutes to the top of Piz Gurkha, which commands a splendid view. Both parties returned to the col, whence the descent was made in twenty minutes to the foot of the snow; and half an hour further to the Rusein Alp. Peak and pass, being nameless, were named in honour of the Gurkhas. In the *Tôdi Climbers' Guide*, p. 30, the height 2856 m. is wrongly assigned to the Cambriales Pass, which is really at or near 2905.

curving stretch of the Hüfi glacier, as we mounted high above its left bank. The unusually pure ice breaks into blue walls, pinnacles, and crevasses. Its purity is due to the wide extent of the *névé* and the relative smallness of the rock-walls that discharge *débris* on to it. In less than two hours of fairly quick going we reached the club-hut, and found a cow-chalet beside it and new milk ready for consumption.

Starting forward again, over stony slopes, we continued for a while in shade, but the sun touched the beautiful glacier below and shone through the tops of its *séracs*, filling them with blue light—a rare effect. To my disgust we presently came upon limestone and began slipping about, as in a limestone country one is apt to do, owing to the smoothness and looseness of the stones which will not bind.

Advancing up a stony hollow, with the crevassed glacier on our left hand and the end of another from the Dössistock on our right, we came to a point where the ice must be entered. The glacier from the Dössistock is broken and has a broad steep snout, down which *séracs* and stones fall. It aimed several at us but we avoided them, though a mass of ice came uncommonly near, some of its fragments stopping within a yard or two of where we were sitting on a moraine.

We advanced up the left side of the glacier over easy snow, troubled only by a difficulty in reconciling the view with the Siegfried map, which is seldom in error. Its representation, however, of the north face of the Catscharauls ridge is, to say the least, inadequate. Ultimately we levelled a plane-table on the glacier, oriented the map, using ice-axes as sights, and so identified our position and surroundings. The col we wished to cross was near at hand. We turned up an easy slope and were upon it in less than an hour's time. It is at the head of the Valpintga and forms the most direct route from the Maderanerthal to the Rusein Alp. Some one must assuredly have crossed it, but no passage

has been recorded. We named it Gurkha Pass. On both sides of it were virgin peaks. That to the north, the Piz Gurkha, as we called it, is marked on the map with the altitude-figures 3063. The other peak or rather crest of peaklets is named Piz Valpintga.

We decided to divide our forces and make the first ascent of both peaks, reuniting afterwards on the col and continuing the descent together. FitzGerald chose the Piz Valpintga, whose highest point is a small tooth of rock planted on a ridge. 'It does not look easy,' said I. 'No matter,' replied Carrel, 'if we can't climb it we will knock it down.' Amar Sing went with Carrel, Aymonod and Karbir with me. Our work was easy enough. We raced up an intermittently steep and broken rock-ridge, and arrived breathless on the summit in thirty-five minutes. The point commands a good view of the Tödi's couloir-furrowed west face and over the wide white area of the Clariden snow-field. Three stones lying together may have been the remains of a stone man. We built one of a decided character before running back to our col.

It should perhaps be mentioned that there are two gaps close together, either of which might be used as the pass. We visited both, but the southern gap is the lower, and the descent from it the more straightforward. It was there we awaited FitzGerald, whose successful ascent of Piz Valpintga we witnessed. He encountered more serious difficulties than we did, and in particular at two points, one on the way to the first peak and the other between the first and second. In descending he halted and unroped to photograph the lower of these places. Amar Sing, climbing about after his reckless fashion, slipped and began falling down the precipitous hill-side. It seemed ten chances to one that he would be killed, but the odd chance glued him to a rough rock before he had gone too far. This adventure occurred out of my sight. When he rejoined me I at once perceived that something had happened to amuse him, for he kept breaking out into laughter every few minutes.

We lingered on the col to consume time, then raced as fast as legs would go to save it, down glissadable snow, débris, and a second snow-slope. Stones, stony meadows, and a stony path brought us to the dirty Rusein Alp, about half-past three o'clock. We spent the afternoon there, cooking, gazing at the unimpressive Tödi, watching the cows, goats, and pigs, and thinking of Placidus a Spescha.

Father Placidus is not a man known to universal fame, but he deserves to be remembered amongst the founders of mountaineering, for no one was ever more imbued with the spirit of a true mountain-lover than he.<sup>1</sup>

He was born in 1752 and gave early signs of mental as well as bodily activity. He entered the monastery of Dissentis, doubtless in order to devote his life to learning. Unfortunately he fell on evil times; his natural studies were pronounced unorthodox, and all manner of difficulties were placed in his way. Then came the wars of the French Revolution, in course of which his monastery was burnt to the ground, and with it all his notes, books, and collections were destroyed. He began to work again, but was again frustrated. His books were taken from him by his superior's orders; he was forbidden to write or even to wander on the mountains. Not till 1821, when he settled in his native village, Trons, was he free, and then he was an old man, but had lost none of his mountain ardour. The Tödi still attracted him and he twice more attempted to reach its summit. In 1824 he made his sixth and last assault. In company with a servant and two chamois hunters he spent the night at these same Rusein huts, where we now were. Next day (Sept. 1) they appear to have climbed to the gap, called Porta de Spescha, where Father Placidus and the servant halted and watched the chamois hunters complete the climb to the top of Piz Rusein, the highest peak of the mountain. This was the

<sup>1</sup> See an article on him by D. W. Freshfield in the *Alpine Journal*, vol. x. p. 289.

first ascent to the true summit of the Tödi, and, though Father Placidus had not the good fortune to make it himself, it was at all events due to his energy alone that it was made.

All the afternoon we sat either looking at the Tödi or watching the cattle. A herd of cows, waiting to be milked, is a picturesque sight. They stand or lie so patiently about and form groups ready to an artist's hand. But to spend a few hours in the midst of such company is far from agreeable, for they are dirty and infested with flies. They poke their inquisitive noses into your back, searching for a salt-lick; the clanging of their bells grows wearisome; and the men that milk them, foul to start with, become, as their work goes forward, saturated with the splashings of milk. It is an indescribable relief when the milking is done and the herd starts off for the night pasturage, but even then the pigs remain behind, rooting and grunting about.

Of course there was no clean square yard of ground near the huts, and their interiors were so filthy that to sleep in them seemed impossible. Our alternatives were either to make our beds on a wood-stack, or to explore far afield for a clean patch of grass. Innumerable toads made the hillside undesirable, so we chose the wood-stack and laid our sleeping-bags upon it. When Fitzgerald was in his, he looked like a mummy on a funeral pyre. Side by side, he and I must have formed a pathetic sight. The pigs grazed, fought, and grunted around us, and the Tödi in the light of approaching sunset frowned down upon us. As night came on and the stars looked forth, we slept in the hot air. Towards midnight a peculiar touch awoke me; it was a cow licking me in the small of the back with her long rough tongue. The night was clear and the stars brilliant. The next thing that awoke me after the cow-lick was a pig-fight; but now the sky was over-roofed with a dense ceiling of cloud wherein the Tödi was wholly swallowed up.

*July 26.<sup>1</sup>*

The cloud-roof descended so continuously that when we started at 3.30 A.M., we hardly knew what plan to adopt. We went forward to the highest hut, and sat in the edge of the mist, waiting an hour for daybreak. Cows were sleeping around us. The damp air was warm. When the fog became milky white we knew that the sun must be rising.

We had meant to climb the Tödi by a snow-filled couloir leading up to the Porta de Spescha, a gap in its southern ridge. We did not know the situation of the foot of this couloir, so the fog vetoed the ascent. As it became, if anything, denser in the advancing day we had to choose between descending the valley, or ascending it and crossing the Sandalp Pass, to which we could direct our steps by compass and map. We chose the latter alternative, though the guides were vocally incredulous as to our capacity of finding the way.

We went forward after setting the aneroid to the measured altitude of the highest hut and taking our bearings. We halted often to fix our position by reference to the contour lines and to guide ourselves by the needle. Thus we crossed the stream from the Rusein glacier and the stony tract about it. At the steep grass-slopes that followed we struck straight up-hill and came to the rock-wall we were expecting to find. We mounted a gully in it, notwithstanding the protests of the guides; who declared that we must be quitting the true direction and climbing the face of the Tödi. In no direction could we see twenty yards, but we held steadily forward, bearing to the left when the aneroid showed that we were at 1400 metres.

At half-past six there came a writhing in the air and an indescribable brightening on all sides. Uncertain objects appeared vaguely above, in various directions.

<sup>1</sup> Sandalp Pass. Left Rusein alp at 3.30 A.M. Twenty minutes to highest huts; two hours and a quarter in thick fog to the pass; half an hour to edge of glacier; one hour and a half to Hinter Sand; one hour and a quarter to Tbierfehd.

The mists parted. We looked down the wavy avenue and beheld, far away to the south, sunlit mountains under a blue sky. The curtain was drawn away from the Tödi's great rock-wall, and soon nothing remained to hide our surroundings. We were close to the pass and walking straight towards it. The guides were amazed.

For a moment we thought the day would be fine, but only for a moment. A southerly gale was blowing on the peak, and clouds gathered again overhead. We hurried up a shale slope to the windy Sandalp pass, halted for a few minutes under some rocks that gave a little shelter, and then struck across the glacier and made our way down its left side. It is an uninteresting glacier, a mere slope of ice, apparently fed by no *névé*. It must have been forgotten when other glaciers retreated. It looks out of date—a thing belonging to some past glacier epoch. We quitted it for long *débris* slopes and the river-side, crossing to the right bank by stepping over a narrow rock-gorge, at the bottom of which the waters boil turbulently. Another bridge took us to the Ober Sandalp, a collection of huts, dismal under clouds. Karbir amused himself, as his custom is, by picking flowers and tying them into bouquets, one of which he presented to each of us. He never picks a mixed bouquet, but gathers flowers of one sort for each bunch. To-day his choice fell on the bee-orchis, which pleased him extremely. He filled his tin tobacco box with specimens, besides decorating all our caps.

The valley, just below the Ober Sandalp, is cut across by a cliff about a thousand feet in height, down which the river plunges in a noble series of waterfalls. The path is cleverly carried down this cliff by the skill of peasant engineers, dead centuries ago. In some places the rock had to be quarried for the way, which was done without blasting, yet efficiently. Elsewhere rough staircases are built up, practicable for cows.

From the top of the wall we looked abroad over the lower valley. The parting mists revealed, incredibly high

up, a few points of rock, as it were floating in the sky. The mists closed on us again and we descended in fog. Romantic writers, half-a-century ago, when they laid the scene of their tale in mountain regions, were fond of causing mists to divide and reveal the heroine poised on a seemingly inaccessible rock, within speaking distance of the hero. Anne of Geierstein thus appears. Somewhat in this fashion the playful fog opened for us on three Swiss girls—summer holiday-makers from Zürich, I dare say—who lost their hearts to the Gurkhas at first sight and stood on a jut of rock waving their handkerchiefs to them as we descended.

The superb basin of Hinter Sand was now before us, as fine an Alpine basin as exists. It is enclosed by precipices of rock that looked blue in the damp air. Bright green carpets lay upon their ledges; yellow seams diversified their mass; green slopes led down from them to the valley floor; and splendid waterfalls tumbled over them from the clouds. We made a long halt in this fine situation, which the low drifting clouds so admirably adorned, but as they again became dense, and massed themselves together at a yet lower level, we were forced to hasten forward all too soon.

Where the valley narrows we crossed the raging torrent and quitted the alpine region. Birch-woods enclosed us and the damp vegetation presented a rich aspect. The ground was muddy with decayed leaves, and a lowland flora blossomed by the soft and tortuous path. There was moss on the scattered rocks and among the grass, producing a soft velvety texture that is not found at higher altitudes. Ferns too fringed the inequalities of the ground and low green stuff, almost rank in its growth, added to the vegetable wealth. The very soil, where it was visible, looked softer and less purely mineral than the mere disintegrated rock which forms the earth of the alps-region. Never do low levels look so beautiful, so incredibly rich, as when one descends upon them after several days spent in the heights.

At the end of the famous stone bridge, the Pantenbrücke, flung across an impressive gorge high above the roaring torrent, Aymonod took it into his head to slip. Running down a wet grass-slope, he trod on a polished fragment of limestone. Away went his foot and down he rolled, laughing, and hardly trying to stop. Rather by accident than design he did come to a halt on a sort of ledge, below which the slope steepened. I watched him with horror, for if he had rolled further he would inevitably have been cast into the gorge over a wall of rock a hundred feet high, of whose existence he was at the moment unaware. When he came on to the bridge and saw the peril from which he had escaped, his amusement gave place to *ex post facto* fear. The wood-path continuing led to the edge of the last descent and showed us the unexpectedly large hotel of Thierfeld amongst meadows in the open valley. We reached it in time for mid-day *table d'hôte* and were astonished to find it full of people. We were shown into a large dining hall, capable of seating from two to three hundred persons. 'What is the use of this?' I asked. 'Oh! it is full every Sunday,' was the reply. 'Crowds come up here at the week's end from Glarus and Zürich. Why, last Sunday, not only was this full, but fifty people went up and slept at the Upper Sand Alp, and as many more at other alps. So it is every fine week. Then there are weddings too. When there is a big wedding in the valley—and that happens often enough—they take this big hall and fill it with guests. It is none too large, I can tell you.'

No sooner were we in the hotel than rain began to fall and thunder to rumble. Little cared we! It rained steadily all the afternoon and far into the night. But, if the bad weather was successful in preventing our intended ascent of the Tödi, we at all events had succeeded in turning the flank of its resistance to our progress. The way to Elm, our next stopping-place, was open before us; if we could not climb over the Hausstock to it, we could at any rate reach it round by the valleys.

Comforted by this reflection, and the excellent food that is always supplied in hotels patronised by the Swiss themselves and not maintained for the mere exploitation of foreigners, we retired to bed at an early hour.

*July 27.<sup>1</sup>*

Rain continued to pour all night and was still falling when we awoke. It looked as though we were to have a day's rest. FitzGerald did not care what happened, for toothache held him fast and a dentist's stairs were the only thing in the nature of a climb likely to console him. Aymonod too was on the sick-list, so we agreed that they should start down the valley when they felt inclined and make for Ragatz and repose. As the day advanced and the clouds wore a less aggressive appearance, I decided to spend the night at the Mitten See hut, if only for the sake of seeing its remarkable surroundings. Should the next day prove fine I could cross to Elm by the Hausstock; in case of bad weather I could descend and reach it by the valleys.

After lunch therefore, Carrel, the Gurkhas, and I left Thierfehd and began to retrace our steps of the previous day as far as the stone bridge where Aymonod had his fall. Ground and trees were bright with rain, and sunshine glittered on the leaves. The hillside we had to mount is broken by tiers of precipices, which cannot be climbed, but must be circumvented by long zigzags, first to the south then to the north, then back to the south again with many minor wriggles. The entire ascent commands a series of the noblest views over the beautiful Linththal and up towards the deep-embayed Sand Alp, where the mountains are diversified by sweeping green slopes and terraces, divided from one another by splendid faces of naked rock, over which tumbles many a cascade, fed by

<sup>1</sup> Mitten See hut. Left Thierfehd at 3 P.M. Forty minutes to Ueli hut; three-quarters of an hour to Lower Baumgarten alp; one hour to top of Thor; half an hour to Nüschen shepherd's hut; three-quarters of an hour to Mitten See hut.

the piled snow-fields and curling cloud-masses, that shine white in the sun, high aloft. Near the little woodman's hut, called Ueli, firs begin to appear amongst the birches. The path winds steadily upwards, now and again traversing some open glade, but for the most part deeply shadowed. Crossing the Wildwüsti brook, in the midst of the second zag, we emerged upon the open alp—a broad green slope, corresponding to a similar fertile area on the opposite side of the valley.

Valleys of terraced type have for me more attraction than others. The forces that produce the terraces generally form also a flat and fertile floor. Above them the valley spreads wide on either hand and gives to the spectator a sense of amplitude that never fails to charm. It is from this level that the scene is best viewed, for all wide valleys, like lakes, should be looked at from above. The first tier of green slopes is still fertile. Villages are dotted about it, often in the most picturesque positions at the edge of the abyss. The higher slopes rise beyond and there is width enough to see them. They carry the eye upwards to the crags and snows that bear the sky. Such was the view that greeted us from the lower Baumgarten alp.

Mounting now, for a while, straight upwards, we passed, by a grassy gully, through the wall of rock above the alp, and emerged on a higher terrace, no longer devoted to cows but grazed by numerous sheep. A track led, in the waning day, to the Nüschen shepherd's hut, planted in a lonely open spot, against some huge fallen blocks of stone. As we approached it the sheep on all the surrounding amphitheatre of hills beheld us and, urged by a longing for salt, rushed down upon us from all sides, with one united 'Baa,' in a wild converging avalanche, seventeen hundred strong. The front ones, when we beat them, tried in sudden terror to retreat, but those behind pressed them on. The thing seemed a joke, but became alarming. Carrel proved a saltier morsel than the rest and the whole flock surged

about him, lifted him off his feet, and carried him forward. He fell to the ground—fortunately the place was flat—and they rushed over him and hid him from our view. At that moment the shepherd appeared and blew three shrill whistles. The flock instantly fled up the mountain-side, scattering in all directions till not two sheep remained together.

The incident was not an inappropriate one to happen in this uncanny place where the pastures are being rapidly swallowed up by accumulations of fallen stone débris. The hut of the shepherd is built against the side of a monstrous rock, one of several grouped together on a small flat area near a spring of water. Seldom have I seen a gloomier spot than this appeared in the waning daylight. Here, in the local legend, is the home of the Nüschenmann, a ghostly shepherd who wanders about, bearing a bag of salt and tapping the rocks with a stick. Did the sheep mistake us for him? The story goes that, sometime in the last century, a couple of men, who had been to Milan cattle-selling, and were returning with their money to the Linththal, were robbed and murdered by the Nüschen shepherd. He died unconvicted of his crime, but his ghost is doomed to walk forever. Peasants and their dogs have often seen it. Sometimes it haunts the spring, sometimes it comes tapping at the door of the hut. It is not, however, a vicious ghost. One cow-herd relates that he often found it useful. If he chanced to meet it he used to put his cattle under its charge for the time, and when he wanted to go down to the valley for a day's holiday he used to summon the Nüschenmann to take his place, and he always came and did his work well.<sup>1</sup>

From the shepherd we purchased wood and received directions for the way. Night was at hand and time precious. One more rock-wall had to be surmounted. Stones set up on end indicated the breach. On rounding the shoulder above it, a wide undulating area with a lake

<sup>1</sup> See *Neue Alpen-post*, xii. 95.

in the midst and precipice-faced mountains around opened upon our view. The hut was near at hand by the lake. Whilst the men were entering and making things ready I remained without, alone in one of the wildest and loneliest spots I ever saw.

‘What is it,’ I again asked myself, ‘that makes this spot also so essentially “wild”?’ It is not more remote from man than some enclosed snow-field like the Plaine Morte; yet the epithet ‘wild’ could not be fitly applied to that. Let the reader picture the scene—a large open undulating area, roughly circular in form and about two miles in diameter; the ground consisting of rotten black slate débris, broken small; a dark still lake in the midst; patches of dwindling snow lying in the hollows, their surface dirty with slate-dust; all around a wall of dark cliffs, ending upwards in a long flat line on one side, in jagged teeth on the other. The effect, I concluded, was chiefly due to the blackness of the large open area. Clouds, hanging about the precipices and roofing the sky, added to the gloom. The place looked as though it ought to be grassed over and fertile, but had been blasted into barrenness by some diabolic agency, and fitted to be a witch’s kitchen, a devil’s punch-bowl, a dragon’s retreat, or any such fearsome lair as the shuddering fancy of mediæval man invented to mate with his tormented mind.

The Muten See Hut, where we passed the night in comfort, is the perfection of an Alpine refuge. It is warmly built of wood, sufficiently furnished, and excellently situated. A baby was once born there. From the visitors’ book we learnt that it is much used, especially by mountain excursionists from the neighbouring towns in Canton Glarus. Five Americans,

‘Four from Manhattan’s isle and one from Rome,’

metrically relate how they made the hut their home for a week. The verses are unusually good for a visitors’-book contribution, and I was minded to make extracts for the

reader's amusement, but laziness forbade; or perhaps it was diminished atmospheric pressure, traces of the unpleasant effects of which I noticed as I was crawling into my sleeping-bag.

*July 28.<sup>1</sup>*

When we looked forth in the early morning, clouds still covered the sky, drifting across it from the north-west and hiding the Ruchi almost to its base. I felt pretty sure of being able to find the way by aid of the compass, even in the thickest fog, for violent storm did not seem to be threatened. We started out, shortly after five o'clock, into the bleak day beneath the dark driving clouds. Rocks rotting into mud formed the ground over which we marched to the western margin of the Mitten See, whose waters now looked like ink. In the uncertain light distances seemed greater than in fact they were. We reached the foot of the Ruchi's rock-face sooner than we expected and thereupon entered the fog. Débris-slopes led to the lower snow, above which we gained the north-west arête and followed it, as a cow might easily have done, to the top. The wind made us shiver and the clouds shut us in. We sought for the east arête and could not find it. Eastward a rock-wall fell precipitously away. At last we dimly descried a flat snow-place, about thirty feet down, a few yards north of the actual top. Dropping on to this, we discovered it to be the starting-point of the desired ridge.

When we had felt our way along it without difficulty for some distance, the clouds lifted and showed us the Hausstock. I was rather disappointed, for 'feeling the way' is decidedly amusing to the guide of the party. The ridge that connects the Ruchi with the Hausstock is a curious one. It is for the longer part a broad hog's

<sup>1</sup> Ruchi and Hausstock. Left Mitten See hut at 5.20 A.M. One hour, twenty-five minutes up north-west arête to top of Ruchi; one hour to top of Hausstock; three-quarters of an hour down east arête to Meer pass; three-quarters of an hour down rocks from a point west of black tooth, descending and traversing east to snow-slope at head of Wiehlenalp; five minutes glissade; half an hour to Ober Staffel; one hour to Elm.



AMAR SING ON THE ROCK TOOTH, MEER PASS



back, but at one point, where the slate is finely laminated, a bite is taken out of it and it becomes narrow and looks difficult. We put on the rope and prepared for adventure; but none came. The descent into the gap was easy, the powdery disintegration of the slate making friction between the boot and the rock. The same was true of the ascent beyond, so that the long iron rope fixed to assist climbers is a mere superfluity. It may perhaps be useful to persons liable to giddiness, for the slope is steep and smooth, but such persons should not go on mountains at all.

Beyond this gap is a snow mound and another gap, where we halted for breakfast under excellent shelter and looked down upon the curious Fluaz glacier, whose entire surface is coal-black with slate *débris*. Such glimpses of our immediate surroundings as the drifting clouds permitted were peculiar, the rocks taking strangest forms and rotting both into flat surfaces and threatening precipices. Starting on again, we entered fog, which grew in density as we mounted, and almost hid us from one another when we reached the top of the Hausstock.

For greater security of route we commenced the descent, not by the south-east snow-face, which we could not see, but by the shattered east *arête*, which we could at any rate feel. This, though previously untraversed, went easily enough and enabled us to emerge from the mists on the broad Meer pass, where there is a quaint little tooth of black rock which we climbed. Karbir discovered that the stones lying about hummed, when thrown into the air. This gave him plenty to do. Below on the north was a rock wall, down which we saw a practicable route. It proved to be like the face of the Grivola, with this difference, that every bit of rock was loose and that all the ledges were encumbered with slaty earth. The best way down lies to the right of that taken by us.

The descent of the wall took nearly an hour and landed us on a slope of hard snow, down which we glissaded at a

fine pace. We came upon grass almost at once, and, half an hour further, a milk chalet, where a herd of swine were sleeping in the sun. An excellent mule-path, expanding presently into a road, led along the charming valley to Elm, which, with its fatal scar, had been visible to us from the col. The chalets in the lower part of the valley are well built and each has its patch of tended flower-garden, bespeaking a nice-minded folk. On entering the village we passed the church and were attracted into its precinct by the beds of brightly blossoming flowers growing upon the graves. Against the church-wall is a simple but impressive monument to the hundred and fifteen people killed by the famous landslip of the 11th September 1881. This landslip still remains for the folk of Elm the most important historical event. I had not been half an hour in the excellent little inn before the landlady began to tell me about it with tears in her eyes. 'I was here at the time,' she said, 'and saw it, but I will tell you no more, for you can read it all in this book, far better than you could hear of it from me.' With these words she gave me a substantial volume, by Pfarrer E. Buss and Professor A. Heim, entitled *Der Bergsturz von Elm*. I looked into it listlessly, but it so arrested and held my attention that I read every word and walked over the site of the appalling catastrophe to identify the places mentioned. The story is worth relating but demands a chapter to itself.

July 29.<sup>1</sup>

Four days of steady work and little sleep had left us all tired. Fatigue, however, only made us the more

<sup>1</sup> Martinsloch (2636 m.), and Piz Segnes (3102 m. 10,178 ft.). Left Elm at 4 A.M. Mounted by Niederen valley in three hours and three-quarters to the Martinsloch; half an hour straight down gully and across a little snow-field; one hour twenty minutes up south-west face and south arête to top of Piz Segnes; quarter of an hour to col north of peak and down rock-slope to east; forty minutes to Sardona Pass (2840 m.); forty minutes down, round south side of Sardona glacier, and down short débris and long grass slopes to the foot of the steep part of the Sardona alp; twenty-five minutes to Sardona huts; one hour and a quarter to S. Martin's bridge; one hour and three-quarters to Vättis.

eager to reach the flesh-pots of Ragatz and enjoy a day or two's rest, in the company of friends and baggage. The doubtful weather quickened our haste, for it seemed certain that another downpour was brewing, and we were far from wishing to be mewed up in Elm for two or three rainy days. A fine morning helped us to start. Sleepy and footsore, we were on the way by four o'clock. The hole in the mountains, the needle's eye or Martinsloch which we were to thread, was visible against the cold blue heaven above. It looked dreadfully far off. We traversed the iron-bridge and followed the road over the new-made fields and the ruins of the landslip. Turning up the deep Tschingel valley we plodded ceaselessly on. The hollow yielded in time to grass-slopes and those to débris, by which we approached the foot of the thin and precipitous wall of rock that divides the Tschingel from the Segnes valley. In this wall, about two hundred feet below its crest, is pierced by natural agency the Martinsloch, through which our way was to lie. Thus far our route had been singularly dull. The last bit of the ascent was the reverse.

None of us had ever been in such peculiar surroundings. A steep débris-gully leads to the hole; walls of rock jut out on either side of it. As we advanced, cutting steps in the fine and firmly compacted débris, stones came rattling down and made us skip aside. The hole, which seemed a mere pin-prick from Elm, now loomed like a great arch over our heads. The sun shone through it and made drops of water, that rained from its roof and were borne out by the draught, resemble drops of falling light. The nearer we approached the arch the greater became the impression of weight conveyed by the aspect of its roof. No arch raised by human hands has the massiveness of this. Coming nearer we climbed out on to the wall that juts westward from it. It was well worth both seeing and coming to see.

Satisfied with our inspection we passed through the hole and along an inclined shelf on the other side. The

descent was expected to be easy. It proved no such thing. We had to exchange the shelf for a steep and narrow gully, blocked in one place by a wedged boulder. The drop from this was vertical. Only Carrel's legs were long enough to gain secure grip, one foot against each side wall. The rest went down the rope. A débris-slope followed and then a small snow-field, the shrinking remnant of what was once a glacier. Thus we reached the foot of the dull south-west face of Piz Segnes. From a distance this looked steep, but we walked straight up it, taking to a band of snow half way. Falling stones, one of which hit me on the heel, dislodged us. Higher up came a place where the fine slate débris were compacted with hard ice, like plums in a pudding. We cut steps across the curious compound to the south arête, whence falls eastward the rottenest slope of rock I ever saw. The ridge too has rotted into a rounded bank, up which we walked to the peak.

Piz Segnes is said to command a fine view. Clouds obscured the southern part of it and were hurrying up, on our level, like fingers pointing at us. To the north the horizon was clear and the distance filled with ranks of hills, snowless but charming in colour. In one direction masses of ruddy purple rocks showed through a broken green covering of grass, whilst a grey precipice stretched behind and blue distances beyond.<sup>1</sup>

A cool wind made the summit disagreeable for a long halt, so we hurried northward over a snow-field to a col. Thinking the snow looked like a mere bed, we omitted to rope. Before we had gone far Carrel was waist-deep in a crevasse, whence he was with difficulty extracted. It had been completely hidden, though at least two yards wide! On the col the wind was as bad as above, so we went eastward down some rocks, seeking shelter

<sup>1</sup> On the top we found an empty meat-tin which had contained *Ochsenfleisch in Bouillon* manufactured by the *Schweizerische Armee Conservefabrik* at Rorschach. Each tin would appear to hold a meal for a man. The stuff can be heated. Mr. Coolidge tells me it is good.

but finding none, for the wind followed us merrily. We roped and struck down the *névé*, which is cut off from the considerable Sardona glacier below by a high wall of impracticable rocks, only broken at one place, about half-way between the Saurenstock and Piz Segnes. Here the *névé* pours steeply down and is cut across by a great *bergschrund*. Its upper lip so overhangs that we could not see where it was bridged. We chose what seemed a likely place, but the overhang was so great and the slope above so steep that we gave it up. We retraced our steps a little way, traversed southwards, and descended on to the top of the rock wall, having seen that close against it was a bridge. All this cost time. Once below the *schrund*, we hurried over the beautiful snow-field to the broad Sardona Pass, just on the other side of which we at last found rocks and shelter from the fussy wind.

As we sat at lunch, looking down the pretty and historically interesting Calfeisen Thal,<sup>1</sup> we little dreamed of the miseries it had in store for us. A series of glissades down the south side of the Sardona glacier brought us almost immediately to grass-slopes. They were green, and dotted over with a profusion of forget-me-nots sprinkled with a few yellow flowers and yet fewer gentians. I commend this combination of colours to some designer of stuffs.

The steep slopes gave place to gentle ones, nasty to traverse, for they were the lumpiest I ever saw, besides being covered with a tangle of low shrubs, over which we tripped and stumbled into the holes between the earth mounds. By the time we reached the Sardona Alp my temper was worthless and I had taken refuge in a silence which became steadily grimmer. For the next three hours we followed the vilest path I ever saw—a succession of ups and downs, all unnecessary and arguing the improvidence of a folk as stupid as the cows and pigs

<sup>1</sup> In the middle ages it was colonised by immigrants from Wallis, see Coolidge's *Tödi* in the series of Climbers' Guides, pp. vii. sqq.

they drive up it. To make matters worse, it is a limestone path, covered by a loose encumberment of slippery pebbles, the nastiest stuff to walk upon that can be conceived. Only a brutal people could go on from year to year tolerating such a path, and it must be many centuries old. Of the inhabitants of this beautiful but vilely roaded valley we only met three, and they, for stolid gruffness, fully came up to my expectation. They were lying on the grass, and each held a wooden spirit-flask to his mouth. They had doubtless been attending the annual Mass in St. Martin's chapel, which was held this day. Near the foot of the valley a new road had recently been made from below, but we could find no bridge across to it. The descent seemed endless. We were all fagged out when, at half-past five, we entered the village of Vättis, and took refuge at an inn, whose landlord, in due time, gave me proof that he was a thief and a robber. Leaving the Gurkhas and Carrel behind for the night, I drove down with the baggage to Ragatz.

There was an hour to wait before the wretched one-horsed chaise arrived that was to take me, and I was swindled over that too, as I was over the guides' *pension*. When at last the thing started, heavy clouds were massed in the south. They came up behind us as we went. Blacker and blacker they grew, filling the head of the valley with rain and reaching out black arms over our heads. Now and then rain dropped off the tips of their fingers upon us. I urged the stupid driver to a better speed. At length even he perceived that a storm was coming. By good luck he was wearing a new coat and hat, for whose preservation he had just sense enough to be anxious. We reached the edge of the broad Rhine valley and began the steep descent into it. Ragatz was at our feet. The man put a shoe on to one of the wheels, clamped the other with the break, and whipped up his young and nervous horse. The road was rough, but down we swiftly went, bumping about like a cork on the end of a string jiggered by a child for a kitten's amusement.

The clouds grew denser every moment; lightning flashed from them and darted through their midst; another storm was brewing on the opposing hills. The long zigzags seemed endless; the roofs of Ragatz would not approach. We raced on through a thick wood, occasionally passing into the open and beholding the broad rich valley-flat with the river winding in it, the hills beyond grey in the twilight, the town at our feet sparkling with many lamps, and the wild sky overhead split with lightning. The faster we went, the more the driver whooped and hallooed. People by the roadside jumped up the bank to escape us. We dashed through Pfäfers, by a huge pile of building. 'What is that big place?' I asked. 'The mad-house. Whoop! Whoop!' was the reply and crack went the whip. Then the rain began. We heard it approaching over the wood. The trees rocked and roared. But now we were on the flat. In a few moments we entered the town and almost immediately stopped at the door of the Quellenhof, whose well-dressed inhabitants, just emerging from dinner, regarded me, and were justified in so doing, as some wild apparition dropped upon them from another world.

## CHAPTER XI

### MOUNTAIN-FALLS

THE great landslip which caused the formation of the Gohna Lake, in Gurhwal, in the central Himalayas, has recently attracted much attention. Such landslips are not uncommon in mountain ranges of relatively recent elevation, where strata steeply tilted are in positions of not very durable equilibrium. Undermining by water, changes of temperature, and the like forces, are constantly at work; and from year to year their activity makes itself apparent. In process of time the amount of rock ready to slide is reduced, and the mountain range, as its peaks diminish in altitude and lose their precipitancy of form, becomes more stable and less liable to monstrous fallings and catastrophes.

The Himalayas are, from a geological point of view, a young set of mountain ranges: they still tumble about on an embarrassingly large scale. The fall, which recently made such a stir, began on September 6th, 1893. That day the Maithana Hill (11,000 feet), a spur of a large mountain mass, pitched bodily, rather than slid, into the valley.

‘Little could be seen of the terrible occurrence, for clouds of dust instantly arose, which darkened the neighbourhood and fell for miles around, whitening the ground and the trees until all seemed to be snow-covered. The foot of the hill had been undermined by springs until there was no longer an adequate base, and in the twinkling of an eye a large part of the mountain slid down, pushed forward, and shot across the valley, presenting to the little river a lofty and impervious wall, against which its waters afterwards gathered. Masses of rock were hurled a mile

away, and knocked down trees on the slopes across the valley. Many blocks of dolomitic limestone, weighing from thirty to fifty tons, were sent like cannon-shots through the air. The noise was terrific, and the frightened natives heard the din repeated at intervals for several days, for the first catastrophe was succeeded by a number of smaller slides. Even five months after the mountain gave way, every rainy day was succeeded by falls of rocks. A careful computation gives the weight of the enormous pile of rubbish at 800,000,000 tons.'

The Himalayas are indeed passing through their dramatic geological period, when they give rise to such landslips as this at relatively frequent intervals. Plenty of landslips quite as big have been recorded in the last half-century, and, amongst the remote and uninhabited regions of the great ranges, numbers more of which no record is made constantly happen. The catastrophic period has ended for the Alps. Landslips on a great scale seldom occur there now; when they do occur, the cause of them is oftener the activity of man than of natural forces. But of a great landslip in the Alps details are sure to be observed, and we are enabled to form a picture of the occurrence. When the Alps tremble the nations quake; the Himalayas may shudder in their solitudes, but the busy occidental world pays scant attention, unless gathering waters threaten to spread ruin afar. Of the Gohna Lake we have been told much, but little of the fall that caused it. Eye-witnesses appear not to have been articulate. We can, however, form some idea of what it was like from the minute and accurate account we possess of a great and famous Alpine landslip: I refer to that which buried part of the village of Elm, in Canton Glarus, on September 11th, 1881.<sup>1</sup>

Elm is the highest village in the Sernf valley. Its position is fixed by the proximity of a meadow-flat of considerable extent. Above this three minor valleys radiate,

<sup>1</sup> All details connected with this avalanche were collected on the spot, and shortly afterwards published in a volume—*Der Bergsturz von Elm*—by E. Buss and A. Heim. Zürich, 1881.

two of which are separated from one another by a mountain mass, whose last buttress was the Plattenbergkopf, a hill with a precipitous side and a flat and wooded summit, which used to face the traveller coming up the main valley. It was this hill that fell.

The cause of the fall was simple, and reflects little credit on Swiss communal government. About half-way up the hill there dips into it a bed of fine slate, excellent for school-slates. In the year 1868 concessions were given by the commune for working this slate for ten years without any stipulation as to the method to be employed. Immense masses of the rock were removed. A hole was made 180 metres wide, and no supports were left for the roof. It was pushed in to the mountain to a depth of 65 metres! In 1878, when the concessions lapsed, the commune, by a small majority, decided to work the quarry itself. Every burgher considered that he had a right to work in the quarry, when the weather was unsuitable for farm labour. The place was therefore overcrowded on wet days, and burdened with unskilful hands. The quarry, of course, did not pay, and became a charge on the rates, but between eighty and one hundred men drew wages from it intermittently.

The roof by degrees became visibly rotten. Lumps of rock used to fall from it, and many fatal accidents occurred. The mass of the mountain above the quarry showed a tendency to grow unstable, yet blasting went forward merrily, and no precautions were taken. Cracks opened overhead in all directions; water and earth used to ooze down through them. Fifteen hundred feet higher up, above the top of the Plattenbergkopf, the ground began to be rifted. In 1876 a large crack split the rock across, above the quarry roof, and four years later the mass thus outlined fell away. In 1879 serious signs were detected of coming ruin on a large scale. A great crack split the mountain across behind the top of the hill. The existence of this crack was well known to the villagers, who had a special name for it. It steadily lengthened and widened

By August 1881 it was over four metres wide, and swallowed up all the surface drainage. Every one seems then to have agreed that the mountain would ultimately fall, but no one was anxious. The last part of August and the first days of September were very wet. On September 7th masses of rock began to fall from the hill; more fell on the 8th, and strange sounds were heard in the body of the rock; work was at last suspended in the quarry. On the 10th a commission of incompetent people investigated the hill, and pronounced that there was no immediate danger. They, however, ordered that work should cease in the quarry till the following spring, whereat the workmen murmured. All through the 10th and the morning of the 11th falls of rock occurred every quarter of an hour or so. Some were large. They kept coming from new places. The mountain groaned and rumbled incessantly, and there was no longer any doubt that it was rotten through and through.

The 11th of September was a wet Sunday. Rocks and rock-masses kept falling from the Plattenberg. The boys of the village were all agog with excitement, and could hardly be prevented by their parents from going too near the hill. In the afternoon a number of men gathered at an inn in the upper village, just at the foot of the labouring rocks, to watch the falls. They called to Meinrad Rhyner, as he passed, carrying a cheese from an alp, to join them, but he refused, 'not fearing for himself, but for the cheese.' Another group of persons assembled in a relative's house to celebrate a christening. A few houses immediately below the quarry were emptied, but the people from them did not move far. At four o'clock Schoolmaster Wyss was standing at his window, watch in hand, registering the falls and the time of their occurrence. Huntsman Elmer was on his doorstep looking at the quarry through a telescope. Every one was more or less on the *qui vive*, but none foresaw danger to himself.

Many of the people in the lower village, called Müsli,

which was the best part of a mile distant from the quarry, and separated from it by a large flat area, were quite uninterested. They were making coffee, milking cows, and doing the like small domestic business.

Suddenly, at a quarter-past five, a mass of the mountain broke away from the Plattenbergkopf. The ground bent and broke up, the trees upon it nodded, and folded together, and the rock engulfed them in its bosom as it crashed down over the quarry, shot across the streams, dashing their water in the air, and spread itself out upon the flat. A greyish-black cloud hovered for a while over the ruin, and slowly passed away. No one was killed by this fall, though the débris reached within a dozen yards of the inn where the sightseers were gathered. The inhabitants of the upper village now began to be a little frightened. They made preparations for moving the aged and sick persons, and some of their effects. People also came up from the lower villages to help, and to see the extent of the calamity. Others came together to talk, and the visitors who had quitted the inn returned to it. Some went into their houses to shut the windows and keep out the dust. No one was in any hurry.

This first fall came from the east side of the Plattenbergkopf; seventeen minutes later a second and larger fall descended from the west side. The gashes made by the two united below the peak, and left its enormous mass isolated and without support. The second fall must have been of a startling character, for Schoolmaster Wyss forgot his watch after it. It overwhelmed the inn and four other houses, killed a score of persons, and drove terror into all beholders, so that they started running up the opposite hill. Oswald Kubli, one of the last to leave the inn, saw this fall from close at hand. He was standing outside the inn when he heard some one cry out: 'My God, here comes the whole thing down!' Every one fled, most making for the Düniberg. 'I made four or five strides, and then a stone struck Geiger and he fell without a word. Pieces from the ruined inn flew over

my head. My brother Jacob was knocked down by them. Again a dark cloud of dust enveloped the ruin. As it cleared off, Huntsman Elmer could see, through his glass, the people racing up the hill (the Düniberg) 'like a herd of terrified chamois.' When they had reached a certain height most of them stood still and looked back. Some halted to help their friends, others to take breath.

'Of those who were before me,' relates Meinrad Rhyner, 'some were for turning back to the valley to render help, but I called to them to fly. Heinrich Elmer was carrying boxes, and was only twenty paces behind me when he was killed. There were also an old man and woman, who were helping along their brother, eighty years old; they might have been saved if they had left him. I ran by them, and urged them to hasten.'

Of all who took refuge on the Düniberg, only six escaped destruction by the third fall, and they held on their way, and went empty-handed. Ruin overtook the kind and the covetous together.

At this time, before the third fall, fear came also upon the cattle. A cow, grazing far down the valley, bellowed aloud and started running for the hillside with tail outstraightened. She reached a place of safety before her meadow was overwhelmed. Cats and chickens likewise saved themselves, and two goats sought and found salvation on the steps of the parsonage.

During the four minutes that followed the second fall every one seems to have been running about, with a tendency, as the moments passed, to conclude that the worst was over. Then those who were watching the mountain from a distance beheld the whole upper portion of the Plattenbergkopf, 10,000,000 cubic metres of rock, suddenly shoot from the hillside. The forest upon it bent 'like a field of corn in a wind,' before being swallowed up. 'The trees became mingled together like a flock of sheep.' The hillside was all in movement, and 'all its parts were playing together.' The mass slid, or rather shot down, with extraordinary velocity, till its

foot reached the quarry. Then the upper part pitched forward horizontally, straight across the valley and on to the Düniberg. People in suitable positions could at this moment clearly see through beneath it to the hillside beyond. They also saw the people in the upper village, and on the Düniberg, racing about wildly. No individual masses of rock could be seen in the avalanche, except from near at hand ; it was a dense cloud of stone, sharply outlined below, rounded above. The falling mass looked so vast that Schoolmaster Wyss thought it was going to fill up the whole valley. A cloud of dust accompanied it, and a great wind was flung before it. This wind swept across the valley and overthrew the houses in its path 'like haycocks.' The roofs were lifted first, and carried far, then the wooden portions of the houses were borne bodily through the air, 'just as an autumn storm first drives off the leaves and then the dead branches themselves from the trees.' In many cases wooden ruins were dropped from the air on to the top of the stone débris when the fall was at an end. Eye-witnesses say that trees were blown about 'like matches,' that houses were 'lifted through the air like feathers,' and 'thrown like cards against the hillside,' 'that they bent, trembled, and then broke up like little toys' before the avalanche came to them. Hay, furniture, and the bodies of men were mixed with the house-ruins in the air. Some persons were cast down by the blast and raised again. Others were carried through the air and deposited in safe positions ; others, again, were hurled upward to destruction and dropped in a shattered state as much as a hundred metres away. Huntsman Elmer relates as follows :

'My son Peter was in Müsli (nearly a mile from the quarry) with his wife and child. He sought to escape with them by running. On coming to a wall, he took the child from his wife and leaped over. Turning round, he saw the woman reach out her hand to another child. At that moment the wind lifted him, and he was borne up the hillside. My married daughter, also in Müsli, fled with two children. She held the younger

in her arms and led the other. This one was snatched away from her, but she found herself, not knowing how, some distance up the hillside, lying on the ground face downwards, with the baby beneath her, both uninjured.'

The avalanche, as has been said, shot with incredible swiftness horizontally across the valley. It pitched on to the Düniberg, struck it obliquely and was thus deflected down the level and fertile valley-floor, which it covered in a few seconds, to the distance of nearly a mile and over its whole width, with a mass of rock-débris, more than thirty feet thick. Most of the people on the hillside were instantly killed, the avalanche falling on to them and crushing them flat, 'as an insect is crushed into a red streak under a man's foot.' Only six persons here escaped. Two of them were almost reached by the rocks, the others were whirled aloft through the air and deposited in different directions. One survivor describes how the dust-cloud overtook him, 'and came between him and his breath.' He sank face downwards on the ground, feeling powerless to go further. Looking back he saw 'stones flying above the dust-cloud. In a moment all seemed to be over. I stood up and climbed a few yards to a spring of water to wash out the dust, which filled my mouth and nose (all survivors on the Düniberg had the same experience). All around was dark and buried in dust.'

It was only when the avalanche had struck the Düniberg and began to turn aside from it—the work of a second or two—that the people in the lower village, far down along the level plain, had any suspicion that they were in danger. Twenty seconds later all was over. Some of them who were on a bridge had just time to run aside, not a hundred yards, and were saved, but most were killed where they stood. The avalanche swept away half the village. Its sharply defined edge cut one house in two. All within the edge were destroyed, all without were saved. Almost the only persons wounded were those in the bisected house. Huntsman

Elmer with his telescope and Schoolmaster Wyss with his watch, whose houses were just beyond the area of ruin, beheld the dust cloud come rolling along, 'like smoke from a cannon's mouth, but black,' filling the whole width of the flat valley to about twice the height of a house. The din seemed to them not very great, and the wind, which, in front of the cloud, carried the houses away like matchwood, did not reach them. Others describe the crash and thunder of the fall as terrific; it affected people differently. All agree that it swallowed up every other sound so that shrieks of persons near at hand were inaudible. The mass seemed to slide or shoot along the ground rather than to roll. One or two men had a race for life and won it, but most failed to escape, who were not already in a place of safety. Fridolin Rhyner, an eleven-year-old boy, kept his head better than any one else in the village, and succeeded in eluding the fall. He saw, too, 'how Kaspar Zentner reached the bridge, as the fall took place, and how he started running as fast as he could, but was caught by the flood of rocks near Rhyner's house; he jumped aside, however, into a field, limped across it, got over the wall into the road, and so just escaped.'

The last phase of the catastrophe is the hardest to imagine and was the most difficult to foresee. The actual facts are these. Ten million cubic metres of rock fell down a depth (on an average) of about 450 metres, shot across the valley and up the opposite (Düniberg) slope to a height of 100 metres, where they were bent  $25^{\circ}$  out of their first direction and poured almost like a liquid, over a horizontal plane, covering it, uniformly, throughout a distance of 1500 metres and over an area of about 900,000 square metres to a depth of from 10 to 20 metres. The internal friction of the mass and the friction between it and the ground were insignificant forces compared with the tremendous momentum that was generated by the fall. The stuff flowed like a liquid. No wonder the parson, seeing the dust-cloud rolling

down the valley, thought it was only dust that went so far. His horror, when the cloud cleared off and he beheld the solid grey carpet, beneath which one hundred and fifteen of his flock were buried with their houses and their fields, may be imagined. He turned his eyes to the hills and lo! the familiar Plattenbergkopf had vanished and a hole was in its place.

The roar of the fall ceased suddenly. Silence and stillness supervened. Survivors stood stunned where they were. Nothing moved. Then a great cry and wailing arose in the part of the village that was left. People began to run wildly about, some down the valley, some up. As the dust-cloud grew thinner the wall-like side of the ruin appeared. It was quite dry. All the grass and trees in the neighbourhood were white with dust. Those who beheld the catastrophe from a distance hurried down to look for their friends. Amongst them was Burkhard Rhyner, whose house was untouched at the edge of the débris. He ran to it and found, he said, 'the doors open, a fire burning in the kitchen, the table laid, and coffee hot in the coffee-pot, but no living soul was left.' All had run forth to help or see, and been overwhelmed—wife, daughter, son, son's wife, and two grandchildren. 'I am the sole survivor of my family.' Few were the wounded requiring succour: few the dead whose bodies could be recovered. Here and there lay a limb or a trunk. On the top of one of the highest débris-mounds was a head severed from its body, but otherwise uninjured. Every dead face that was not destroyed wore a look of utmost terror. The crushed remains of a youth still guarded with fragmentary arms the body of a little child. There were horrors enough for the survivors to endure. The memory of them is fresh in their minds to the present day.

Such was the great catastrophe of Elm. The hollow in the hills, whence the avalanche fell, can still be seen, and the pile of ruin against and below the Düniberg; but almost all the rest of the débris-covered area has

been reclaimed and now carries fields, which were ripening to harvest when I saw them. The fallen rocks, some big as houses, have been blasted level; soil has been carried from afar and spread over the ruin. A channel, forty feet deep or more, has been cut through it for the river, so that the structure of the rock-blanket can still be seen. The roots of young trees now grasp stones that took part in that appalling flight from their old bed of thousands of years to their present place of repose. The valley has its harvests again, and the villagers go about their work as their forefathers did, but they remember the day of their visitation, and to the stranger coming amongst them they tell the tragic tale with tears in their eyes and white horror upon their faces

## CHAPTER XII

### THE RHÄTIKON AND SILVRETTA GROUPS

*July 30, 31, Aug. 1*

DURING these days rain fell continuously and thunder rumbled amongst the hills. Nothing could have been more *à propos*. Our arrangements were made for a two days' halt and it would have been a pity to waste fine weather upon in-door work. A heavy mail awaited us. Not the least agreeable part of it was a letter from my excellent friend Harkbir Thapa, comrade of Karbir and Amar Sing. He wrote from Shikara in Kaghan, and this is a translation by my old travelling companion, Lieut. the Hon. C. G. Bruce, of what he said, with the preliminary embroidery of compliments left out.

‘CONWAY SAHIB JEE!—I, the poor Lance Naik Harkbir Thapa, day and night give you my salaams. If you are not well I shall be very sorry, and if the Five Almighty Gods have not got you in their keeping I shall also be very sorry to hear it. I am myself very well, and hope this reaches you as well as it leaves me. Bruce sahib and I, Lalbir and Pretiman Rana, have just been up a difficult mountain among the mountains of Manur and up Bira Pahar. No one could go, but we went up. And we and Bruce sahib have got fifteen days' leave to do work in the snow. Conway sahib jee! I have got a kukri for you, and will send it by Bruce sahib when he goes. And are you pleased or not pleased with me? HARKBIR THAPA.

*‘B Company, 1st 5th Gurkha Rifles.’*

As I have quoted this letter I may as well likewise quote in this place two other delightful letters I have received from my Gurkha friends since their return to India. Both were written from Makin in Waziristan.

Bruce kindly sent me translations with them. The words in parentheses are his notes.

'*Sosti sri serwa poma jogé itiadi sakala guna garishba raja bara shama raba ita sri sri sri* [Shastra and beyond me; all their letters begin so]. Now, Conway Sahib jee, I, Lance Naik Harkbir Thapa, send much salaam, and *saban purwar patr midam* [sort of salaam; does not know the meaning himself, but says it is the usual thing to put in a letter]. You ought to be well. Conway Sahib jee, wherever you may be, may always Sri Guru Gurak Nath and Sri Ganga mother keep you well and not trouble you with illness! And if not, then may trouble come on me! And, Conway Sahib jee, if you will stay well then may Sri Guru Gurak Nath and Sri Ganga mother allow me to be well also! And, Conway Sahib jee, the pencil which you sent me I have received from Leften Bruce. I am very much obliged to you. And please, Mr. Conway, write a letter to me. And now, Mr. Conway jee, we are on service and we left our lines 30 days ago, and the 1st Gurkhas from Dharmasala had a great fight. One Engineer Sahib and the Adjutant of the 1st Gurkhas were killed; and of the 1st Gurkhas 30 men were killed. We have burnt all the enemy's villages and blown up all their forts with gunpowder. Now we are encamped close to the fort of Makin. There are many mistakes in this letter which you must correct with your own wits.

'And the — which you have sent me they have arrived, so don't be anxious about them; and about the — which you have sent me I am very pleased indeed, and, Sahib jee, your honour has been very kind to me, and for this I am not at all discontented but very contented.'

The other letter, docked of its flourishes, read thus:—  
After all salaams—

'SAHIB JEE,—Owing to your goodness we two are both well and doing well, and we two, morning and evening, send salaams to both of your honours, . . . and we two are both become happy and contented, and, Sahib jee, we are both on field service at Makin, and the arrangement for the fight is that three Brigades are collected, and the thing of the fight is that as we have met the enemy so we have cut them up. The month of December, 19th, and what I have written you know and understand.

'LANCE NAIK AMAR SING.

'LANCE NAIK KARBIR BURATHOKI.'

With Ragatz, the second stage of our journey and its second month ended together. The morning of the 1st of August broke promisingly. The heavens had emptied themselves and now it was time for the sun to draw back moisture from the sopping earth. Drying clouds hung on all the hills and drifted across the valleys. We took the first train from Ragatz and within an hour were walking up a zigzag road to the village of Seewis,<sup>1</sup> whence the path that we desired to follow into the mountains takes its start. There were shops at Seewis wherefrom we filled our provision sack before starting on our way. At the edge of the village a weird creature rushed from a house and hooked me with an angular finger. 'Come in here ! come in here !' he said. 'Where are you going to sleep to-night ?'

'In the Schamella Hut, of course. What do you want ?'

'But there is nothing there. Nothing ! Unless you have the key. Besides, you must pay. You must pay me.'

'We don't want anything, except what we have with us, and as for the key, we shall find that, I expect.'

'Well, you need not pay me, you can pay at the Douglas Hut, if that's the way you are going ; but I will tell you where the key is. It is in a crack at the very top of the back wall, under a rafter, in a place like this' (pointing to a hole in the wall of his house). 'And now good luck to you ! and good weather !'

A good path led through a shady wood beside the Taschinesbach. Water was oozing out at every point, and the way was a mere river, where it was not a mud-swamp. After nearly two hours of leisurely walking, we emerged upon an open alp and began bend-

<sup>1</sup> Scesaplana. Left Seewis at 2.30 p.m. One hour and a half to branching of the paths beyond Statz ; one hour and a quarter to cow-chalet ; one hour to Schamella hut ; one hour up path to the point 2713 m. ; turned west along the ridge, then north, then west again ; reached summit in three-quarters of an hour ; returned in our steps a short way to top of a gully ; descended gully to Todte Alp ; footpath to Douglas hut in three-quarters of an hour from peak ; one hour to Nerrajöchl ; three-quarters of an hour to Sporer Pass ; two hours and a half down good path to Schruns.

ing round the vast green circle of slopes that lean against Scesaplana's southern wall of rock. Here the Alpine rhododendron was once more in blossom, a friendly sight. Lines of trees struggled up the grass-slopes and broke the smooth monotony of their dip. The rock wall to the north was lost in mists.

Thus, winding upwards, we too entered the clouds, and, in less than four hours from Seewis, came against the hut, which made no opposition to our entrance. Within, there were the customary appointments of an alpine refuge, and there was a closed chamber. I found the chink in the wall, but no key in it—there was only a broken key hanging on a nail. Thereupon the usual series of manœuvres began. We tried to pick the lock with a knife, then to force back the bolt. Neither of these operations is ever successful. Baffled, we took a careful survey of the situation and discovered—what one always discovers—a loose plank that had been, on some former occasion removed by a party in difficulties and could easily be removed again. Carrel entered the narrow opening and handed out pots and cups required for the preparation and consumption of our evening meal.

As evening drew on, the air was full of a dense blue mist that hid the deep Ragatz valley-floor. Smoking mountains stood beyond, and pale cloud-dragons crawled about. Every sign pointed to a clearing of the weather. It was not enough for us to know that we should cross Scesaplana next day—we demanded to see the view from its peak. There is no difficulty whatever in the ascent, yet of all mountains in the Alps, this is perhaps the one which in the case of English climbers, has attracted the very élite. On its summit have stood almost all the men of a former climbing generation, who gave to mountaineering its peculiar *éclat*. They were attracted by the peak's position, not its difficulty; they sought the beauty of its view, not any problem to be solved by physical ingenuity or endurance.

The evening hours in a hut sometimes drag themselves

slowly out, for only in Tirol are books provided for the traveller's amusement. There were no books in the Schamella Hut, but there was a printed paper of rules that was better fun than most comic journals. I copied selections from the English column for the reader's entertainment.

'We recommend to the Travellers,' *etc.*

'In general to take in consideration by every direction for the most attentive management and keep cleanliness of the shelter-hut itself like as the next surrounding of it.

'The case for the needy combustibles (as wood, petroleum, etc.) is absolutely the matter of the travellers, who must agree about it with the personal of the guides.

'It is to be permitted, however, to the latter ones to put on provisions of wood in the proximity of the shelter-huts which is to be indemnified by the tourists for their having made use of the wood according agreement with the guides.

'The foundation of voluntary donations, has the purpose to accomplish the furnitures of the shelter-huts and to contribute to the comfort for the stay, and besides that, it may be recommended to all visitors of the shelter-huts, to their kind attention.

'This Prescription will be translated by order the Central Committee of the S.A. Club in different languages,' *etc.*

'On the name of the "Section Rhaetia"

'the president,

'F. DE SALIS.'

*Aug. 2.*

About half-past five we quitted the comfortable shelter of the hut and went forth into the cold morning air. A lagoon of mist filled the valleys and held on its rippling

surface the sharply outlined shadow of the hills. A well-marked path led straight to the foot of the rocks and even zigzagged amongst them to their crest, so neatly engineered that a clever pony might be taken up what from below appears a precipice. After an hour's easy walk that brought us to this point we halted and looked back over the view, which embraced for the most part blue ridges under lines of stratus cloud, with a few flocks of rounded cloudlets hanging on the slopes.

The remainder of the ascent only occupied a quarter of an hour, and would not have taken so long but for the deep snow that made walking laborious. There on a bench at the summit, in the lee of a big rock, we sat down and gazed upon the lovely view, whose charm lies chiefly in the multitude of blue ridges, broken into curious thumb-like protuberances, that rise behind one another and are backed northwards by the German plain and southwards by a line of snowy hills. A vaporous intricacy added its beauty to valleys and sky. The Lünér See laughed up at us in the sunlight which it tossed back. 'Thither,' I said to Carrel, 'lies the Lake of Constance.'

'Look, Aymonod,' said Carrel, 'there is the lake of Constantinople!'

'He really knows better than that,' said Aymonod to us, 'but he has Constantinople on the brain just now. The fact is, he sat next to a young lady from Constantinople at the servants' *table d'hôte* at Ragatz and he did nothing but talk to her. That was a *table d'hôte*—I never saw anything like it—excellent food, and then such quantities of strange people—from England, France, Germany, Austria, Holland, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, and India—I never saw such a collection in my life and never again shall see. Ragatz is the finest place I have ever been in.'

When the clouds that were playing with the southern hills began to cover the sky, we turned to descend. Going a few yards eastward to a rock, against which are tilted two crosses in memory of men killed in the year 1884,

we reached the top of a snow-slope. A glissade down it brought us to a little gully, below which another glissade and then a footpath over grass-slopes led in fifty minutes to the inn by the Lüner See.

I could not avoid comparing this lake with the Mitten See above Thierfeld. That was wild, solemn, almost repulsive; this on the contrary was endowed with an attractive beauty. Yet their situations are similar, each in the midst of a large hill-basin surrounded by precipitous peaks and walls of rock. To its glorious blue colour the Lüner See doubtless owes much of its charm, a colour derived not by reflection from the sky, but proper to its own waters and set-off by contrast with the light limestone banks. The lower slopes of the hills around are, moreover, bright with green grass, fresh when we saw it after recent rain and diversified with blossoming rhododendrons. The surroundings of the lake, therefore, are not repellent to man. They afford a scene for human activity, a grazing ground for cattle and what not. The background of precipices resembles an enclosing wall, protective to those within.

When we first approached the lake I exclaimed, 'I say, FitzGerald,——'

'I know what you're going to say,' he interrupted; 'you're going to say we'll get rowed across the lake. Trust two lazy men to think alike!'

That was in fact my idea, for there is a boat. But we were not rowed across, for one of the oars was broken, and, though the owner said he would make a new one if we would wait, we did not think the offer worth accepting. So we walked round and up a grass valley, following a number of red paint-marks on successive rocks, enough alone to show that we were no longer in Switzerland. A short hour later we were sitting on a pleasant little grass saddle, called the Verra Joch (2331m.), looking back at Scesaplana or forwards to another little col, the Sporer Pass, which we were about to cross.

Since leaving the ridge of Scesaplana we had been in

Austria. At the foot of the dip before us, there opened on our right hand, a straight-cut gap in the bounding hills, which is fitly named the Swiss Gate. Its eastern door-post is a splendid wall of limestone, plumb vertical and rising to a set of strange peaks, the sharpest of which looked down upon us throughout our descent of the pretty Gauer valley almost as far as Schruns.

The Gauer valley is as charming and fertile as one need wish to see. It has a large alp above, pleasant meadows half-way down, and rich fields and gardens at the foot. The chalets are well built and kept in good repair. The folk are evidently of a different race from the surly people south of Ragatz, though the men resemble the claw-fingered guide of Seewis. They greeted us with warmth, and all had something to say. If we took a wrong turning some one ran to set us right. Hay-making was advanced, and women were piling the hay on wooden posts with bars sticking from them. They wore blue aprons enveloping their skirts and white kerchiefs on their heads. Butterflies made the path gay. I counted no less than ten different sorts in a single group upon the ground. Thus our downward walk was delightful, and when, at half-past three o'clock, we entered the prosperous village of Schruns, where every one seemed to be enlarging or renovating his house, as though there were no such thing in the world as agricultural depression, we felt that we had accomplished all the work the day demanded and with as much enjoyment as any single day can be expected to afford. Storm arose in the evening, and the night was wild.

*Aug. 3.*

The weather, which we hoped would clear, had no such intention. The men started early up the valley on foot. We followed them after the mid-day meal in an Einspänner, drawn by a well-bred young mare of charming but variable disposition. Our route lay straight up the fertile Montavon valley, but the road was not good and the previous night's storm had done it much damage.

At one place a swollen stream broke its banks, and running down the road utterly destroyed it for a hundred yards or more. We halted a while at the pretty inn of Gaschurn, whose landlady came forth to entertain us. She produced photographs of the local costumes and especially of some women's peculiar headdresses. One, for Sunday wear, was like a Greek priest's hat crossed with a bear-skin. She went upstairs to fetch an example of it. 'Here it is,' she said, 'a new one. These are made at Schruns. They are made of wool and are not so heavy as they look. The headdresses of fur are only worn on great occasions, but these are worn every Sunday, or used to be. They are going out of fashion, for the girls now prefer hats such as you see everywhere'

The remainder of the road up to Pattenen, the last village, was in worse condition, so that we were glad to alight and join the guides, who looked utterly bored. Heavy rain, falling almost at once, postponed our departure. We soon decided to spend the night where we were and leave the skies to decide the morrow's plans.

*Aug. 4.<sup>1</sup>*

Rain fell most of the night. Rain was falling when we awoke next day. The wind was bad, the skies heavy, the ground sopping, and snow lay on the hills almost down to the tree level. If the inn had been agreeable we should probably have stayed where we were. As it was, we preferred going forth into the wet. A dull foot-path stretched before us. We followed it up various hills, over several swamps, and around two large valley bends to the Madlenerhaus—a glorified cabane of the Austrian sort, practically a hotel. We met on the way two German gentlemen, past middle age, who were

<sup>1</sup> Ober Vermunt Pass (*circa* 2950 m.). Left Pattenen about 8 A.M.; two hours and three-quarters to Madlenerhaus; one hour and a half to foot of Gross Vermunt Ferner; two hours and a half up the glacier and long snow-slopes to the pass. Descended a narrow valley and *débris-slopes* and joined route from Vermunt Pass; one hour, fifty minutes from col to Guarda; one hour to Ardetz.

walking, as it seemed, incredibly slowly. They reached the hut, however, in the statutory time, so that their pace was the normal one in the Eastern Alps. Probably for wise pedestrians this slow marching is best. With all the walking done in Tirol by persons of sedentary habits, it is seldom one hears of over-walking and its consequent evils. Our fellow-travellers wore light cloaks which covered them and their packs like tents. They could defy the rain. We noticed on this and many later occasions how much better, on the average, German pedestrians are equipped than the corresponding English class.

Our arrival at the hut was signal for a downpour of rain. It drenched our men, who, not believing us when we told them there was an inn ahead, sat down by the way to lunch. But for FitzGerald's energy I should have spent the night where I was. Of course none of us knew the Vermunt Pass that leads hence to the Lower Engadin at Guarda, and there was no chance of seeing it in such weather. In the Middle Ages the weather would not have mattered, for an old local chronicle, the *Chronicle of Galtür*, records, and there is other evidence of the fact, that there used to be a mule-path over the pass. It was destroyed by the Grisons folk in the year 1622 for strategic reasons. This, says the chronicler, was wasted energy, for soon afterwards a glacier formed in the northern valley and closed the route. The glacier, as we had occasion to discover, is still of considerable dimensions. In the days of the road a cattle-fair was annually held at a place still called *Schweizerboden*, about half an hour above the *Madlenerhaus*, where there was an inn, whose ruins are still to be seen.

The weather would not have mattered if we had been provided with a good map; but there are no good maps of the Silvretta district and least of all of its Vorarlberg side. Our only map was Dufour's, which vaguely indicates, and most inaccurately, as we were destined to find, the northern approach to the pass. As, however,

there was nothing for it but to start, we started at one o'clock in the afternoon, and, in an hour and a half, reached the foot of the glacier. Clouds lay low upon it and snow was falling. We dimly perceived that there were rocks ahead, of which the map knows nothing.

From this point we depended wholly on the compass. We roped unnecessarily early in order to keep regularly in line and steered south-south-east. The glacier was deeply covered with new snow and in half an hour wading began. There was nothing visible but the white slope below and the white fog around. Thus we marched for more than two hours, halting every few minutes and always finding that the leader had swerved to the left. The left-ward slope of the glacier caused this swerving. The higher we rose the thicker fell the snow. The expected ridge would not come. Reference to the aneroid showed that we were at least 500 feet above the pass. It was nearly six o'clock; daylight was waning; the cold was intense; a freezing wind began to blow. Clearly we were out of our right direction; we must, I concluded, be east of it. As a matter of fact we were high up on the Dreiländerspitz. We turned westward and traversed the snow-slope in a dogged fashion, feeling doubtful of success. We might be forced to turn back, and then, when we reached the inn, what fools we should look! Every one had warned us not to start. What cheerful companions they would be if we returned to them! And, should we be able to return? We were chilled to the marrow already and it was getting colder every minute. If we had to go back it would probably be with frost-bitten ends and corners.

Such were our thoughts as we pounded westward and nothing came into view. At last we thought we saw a sloping line dividing white from less white. We advanced towards it but it faded away; then we turned south again only to find the slopes steeper, then west once more and once more south. Suddenly there was another sloping line between white and grey. It was only a few

yards off. It proved to be a real ridge. We traversed to it and found a curious place which we could not interpret. There was a white snow arête and, beyond it, a few yards of a rock arête, roughly parallel to the first. Between the two was an enclosed hollow with some water in the bottom, which found an exit by plunging into a 'mill.' We descended into the hole and climbed to the lowest point in the rock ridge beyond. A snowy trough led down from it for the few yards we could see.

FitzGerald and I held a council of war. Clearly this was not the col as marked on the map, for from that a steep snow-slope should have fallen. It was decided that unless the trough led southwards we should turn back and make our way to the Madlener Haus. The compass decided in favour of the trough. It led south-east. Down it accordingly we went with joy. In a few minutes the mists became thinner; we saw neighbouring rocks and other uncertain forms. The new snow was two feet and more deep. Aymonod led. He disappeared, neck-deep, into a crevasse. We hauled him out, but, a few yards further, in he went again and yet a third time. These slight delays diversified the speed of our descent. We soon exchanged the little glacier for snow-covered débris-slopes, down which we hurried into clear air. The north wind was at last blowing, and the mists broke away. Piz Buin's south front stood forth unclouded. It had been our intention to climb him as well as the Gross Litzner in this Silvretta group, but the simple pass we crossed had afforded us more sport than the peaks would have given in fine weather. On looking back now we saw what had happened to us. We passed the frontier ridge not at the true Vermunt Pass but by the next gap east of it, which gave access to the same bay of the Tuoi valley as the Vermunt Pass. No difficulty now intervened between us and the valley-path which was visible below. We descended steep débris and grass-slopes, deep in new snow, to uncovered grass sopping wet, and then to the path. In little more than

an hour from the col we were at an alp, tenanted only by oxen, so that no milk was to be had. We halted for a meal. Ahead was the Lower Engadin and hills beyond, white with new snow like great mountains. The sun was setting; we could not delay. With renewed energy we faced the downward way, and in the growing twilight reached the little square of Guarda, where a belated maiden was washing clothes at the fountain. We inquired the way to Ardetz and started down it. It divided, and we took the wrong turn which ended in open fields. Down them we raced. They led to the edge of a sudden drop, where a wooded gully fell precipitously into mere night. We turned down the gully. The steep soil was loose, and enabled us almost to glissade, neck-deep in weeds. It became stony, but the glissade continued. Sustaining walls, down which we had to feel our way, interrupted it. At length the last wall was passed with a leap into night. A final rush down a hundred feet of stone-débris, the loose stuff tumbling about, carried us on to the hard high road. In three-quarters of an hour we reached Ardetz and found the town asleep.

*Aug. 5.*

The fine weather returned now that we were indifferent to it. We quitted at a moderate hour the simple but comfortable inn, where we had slept so well, and walked down the wide and charming Lower Engadin, passing signs of civilisation, near Tarasp, in the form of mineral springs built over for patients and paths carefully laid out for their exercise. At Schuls the others left me. They walked on to Nauders. I halted to write my journals and follow with the diligence. All that I learnt about Schuls is that the beer is good, but the flies many. At one o'clock the diligence started. I had a back seat sheltered from the breeze, and with the sun shining full on my face. It roasted me to sleep. I awoke sufficiently to pass the Austrian custom-house with success. Its officials were abnormally inquisitive. The diligence was

driven into a kind of barn, whose doors were shut and not reopened till all of us had passed a thorough examination. Everything I possessed was hauled out of my bags on to the floor. The next thing I remember is arriving at Nauders and rejoining FitzGerald and our men. Switzerland was left behind, and only Tirol now remained to be crossed.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OETZ AND STUBAI MOUNTAINS

*Aug. 6.*

NAUDERS, as a resting-place, is little better than the buffet of a railway station. Diligences are frequently passing through and discharging their passengers for a hurried meal. There is a ceaseless running to and fro from morning to night. The post-office is in the hall of the inn. Packages are constantly brought in and all the work of a busy centre is there transacted. For a few hours the hurry and noise are not displeasing, but in time they grow wearisome. We were not sorry when the hour of departure came. The day was fine, though a south wind blew and the sky in the south, without being cloudy, was milky-white.

We drove from Nauders to Graun, over the Reschen Scheideck, a level grass pass that divides the basins of the Inn and the Adige. Southwards we enjoyed a beautiful view of the Ortler group, which looked so fascinating that we nearly turned aside from the direct continuation of our way to climb one of its peaks. An amiable big dog accompanied our Einspänner and made himself agreeable till he saw some older friends far off across the valley, making hay. He rushed to them, gracefully leaping a wide stream on the way, and that was the last we saw of him. At Graun we halted for lunch, and were rejoined by our men.

It was about three o'clock when we left the inn to walk up the very normal Langtaufener valley. Two hours we followed the good mule path to the inn at Hinterkirch. It is a simple place and the inn-keeper, as Aymonod

remarked, was the Man of Valgrisanche over again, in a German form. Our arrival flustered him completely. We further puzzled him by inquiring in too quick succession what supplies he could give us and whether the hut above contained any provisions and, if so, what. He danced about and thumped on the table, laughed and half cried, rushed to his kitchen and back again, appealed to his wife and daughter, and perhaps to posterity. When he went to the cellars to fetch wine, he upset ten bottles and a cheese in his haste. Like the Man of Valgrisanche, the best of his things were down at Graun and would not arrive till next day. He had sent his son for them. Ultimately we got from him pretty much all we needed. After the struggle, as I sat meditating over a cup of coffee, I became aware that a gentleman, whom I supposed to be German, was sitting close before me on a chair that had been vacant. I said to FitzGerald, 'Why, there is some one sitting there. I never saw him come in. Did he rematerialise there?'

'No,' interposed the apparition, with a slight American accent, 'I walked in here quite in the normal manner.'

Starting away from the inn, we mounted the valley path and then, following the indications of the good German and Austrian Alpine Club map, I struck up the hill, to Aymonod's undisguised dislike. 'That cannot be the way,' he said, 'but go on, we shall see.'

We could not find any path, but, keeping by help of the aneroid and the contour lines in the right direction, we gained the sheep-alp which we knew to be on the way. There we found a path going uphill, whereas our further route ought to make a slight descent. Abandoning the path, therefore, we rounded a corner and there was a descending track which led to a little chimney and thenceforward, without a hitch, to the new Weisskugel hut. Aymonod when he saw the descending path broke out into praise.

'You keep on surprising us,' he said. 'We have never travelled with any one who used maps and instruments to find the way. It is really wonderful to us what can be done by such means. Now that I have seen it, I have come to the conclusion that all young men who want to be guides should learn the use of map and compass before they are licensed. There would be many fewer accidents in bad weather if that were done. We are too old to learn, of course, but the young men might learn if the Alpine Clubs would arrange for having them taught.'

At the hut, newly built by the Frankfort section of the German-Austrian Alpine Club, we found three gentlemen and two guides in possession, but there was accommodation for all and to spare. The fittings of the place are excellent: chairs, tables, beds, and a hayloft for the guides. It is only in Tirol that such luxuries are to be found. I did full justice to them, but they produced an ill-effect on FitzGerald, who roused me in the night, shouting 'Help! help!' It appears that he was just being murdered, but I saved his life by awakening him.

*Aug. 7.<sup>1</sup>*

Aymonod entertained the idea, commonly held by west Alpine guides, that there are no glaciers in Tirol. The first hour of our walk up the Langtaufferer glacier sufficed to dispose of this, for its upper basin presents ice-scenery of a magnificence such as many larger glaciers do not yield. We passed below a great ice-fall

<sup>1</sup> Weisskugel (3746 m. = 12,291 ft.). Left the Weisskugel hut by the right bank of the Langtaufferer Glacier at 4.10 A.M. Crossed the glacier to rocks at the foot of the north ridge of the Weisskugel. Climbed these to above the séracs. Descended on to the Langtaufferer névé to leave the baggage (two hours from the hut). Returned to the north arête, at a point just above 3258 m., and followed it to the top in one hour and three-quarters from the baggage. Carrel and the Gurkhas returned to the baggage and carried it over the Weisskugeljoch to the Hinter-Eis névé. The rest of the party descended from the summit straight down the excessively steep east snow-face, and in forty minutes rejoined the others near the point in the névé marked 3086 on the D. und Oe. A.V. map. Vent was reached in three hours and three-quarters' walking. This descent would have been impracticable with the snow in normal condition.

where a part of the Gepatsch glacier's névé tumbles into the Langtauferer ice-stream, displaying some of the finest ice-cliffs I ever saw—impregnable from side to side. The other occupants of the hut started nearly an hour before us and made the ordinary circuit of the glacier, a long *détour* regarded as necessary by the local guides, who dread crevasses. We saw a short cut and took it, making our way over the rocks at the foot of the Weisskugel's north arête, the whole length of which we might easily have followed. Not wishing to carry our baggage over the peak, we descended to the névé on a level with the Weisskugeljoch, where we deposited it. The view from this point in the early morning was beautiful beyond words. Softly undulating fields of snow surrounded us, breaking here and there into mazes of *sérac*, whose tops the sun was brushing. There was a delicacy in the mist-filled and sparkling air that manifested with unusual detail the complex curvatures of the whitest névé. Over the pass rose the Similaun and its attendant peaks, all draped in purest snow, admirably grouped and bathed in glittering atmosphere, through which the sun shone towards us from above their crest.

We reached this point, nearly 1000 feet below the summit of the Weisskugel, in about two hours and three quarters' walking from the hut. The remainder of the ascent lay up a steep snow-slope and back to the northern snow arête. By our descent and re-ascent, we avoided a rocky hump on the ridge, which might have been traversed or turned.

The snow was in excellent condition and the work easily accomplished. The summit rewarded us with the finest panorama we had thus far enjoyed—not indeed for wonder of wide comprehension, but for delicacy of atmospheric effect and richness of unusual colour. Sunwards the air was full of light; in the opposite direction it resembled a purple ocean, within whose depth peaks were submerged like coral reefs and soft clouds floated like fair creatures of the sea. The nearer Oetzthal

peaks, with their sweeping white drapery, were in the flood of light, brilliant as angelic thrones. The Ortler range, though close at hand, stretched faintly across the south horizon, all the shadows upon it being of the same colour as the neighbouring sky. The Silvretta was swallowed up in purple air and only its snow-fields appeared like clouds laid upon the earth. The valleys radiating from our feet bent away in sinuous curves, which brought the eye back along the line of some mountain ridge and thus kept it roving over the wide landscape.

Shortly after our arrival on the top, Carrel and the Gurkhas went down to bring the packs over the Weisskugeljoch, as we were to descend by the south arête, up the last rocks of which an unguided (we thought, misguided) man and his wife were toilsomely ascending. It never was a hard arête, and now all its difficulties were removed by an iron rope fixed like a bannister into high staples. They gripped this rope firmly and slowly approached us, yet with steps so uncertain that we should not have been surprised to see them fall from the ridge.

Tirol is cursed with wire-ropes. Wherever a good scramble was offered by nature, it has been ruined in this fashion by man, with the result that any lumpkin can get conveyed almost anywhere in this mountain area.

On starting to descend we looked down the east face of the mountain. It is very steep, not merely *rapide* but *raide*, as Aymonod said. Usually it must be a sheet of ice below the highest rocks, but this day the ice was buried under a quantity of snow, apparently in good condition. Seeing that a descent by the face would be a very short route if it could be done, we decided to try it as preferable to the chained arête. The few rocks at the top were easy. The first step on the snow proved it good enough for our purposes. We went straight down, marvelling how the snow held on to the slope at all.

One *bergschrund* was passed and then a second. At the foot of the steep face we met our men coming from the Weisskugeljoch and with them proceeded down the glacier to the trodden track from the Hintereisjoch, which we joined in forty minutes from the peak.

A halt was called (at 3000 m.) in the midst of the beautiful snow-field, whereon we laid our packs for seats. The day was still young and the air cool. We looked back at our mountain and could hardly believe that we had come so easily straight down that apparently vertical white wall.

There was still some cold coffee in the gourd. 'Try a little of it,' said Aymonod, 'mixed with red wine. That was the morning draught of Jean-Antoine Carrel and J. J. Maquignaz [the two heroes of his Valtournanche]. It is poison to me, to tell you the truth, but those men!—nothing could poison them.'

Then we fell a-talking, as usual, about contraband, a subject of perennial interest to frontier people in protectionist countries with free trade neighbours.

'The duties in Italy on some things,' said Carrel, 'are more than the things are worth. Why! once when I was landing at Genoa, I had two goats, and I was obliged to leave them on the ship, for no one would have paid the duties for them. It is true they were thin. How did I come to be landing with goats at Genoa? Well it was this way. I was returning from Massowah, and a gentleman sent with me three lions for Umberto and he put on board eighteen goats for the lions to eat. Those that the lions did not eat, I was to keep.'

'I expect,' interrupted Aymonod, 'the lions went on short commons.'

'No! No! They had all the goats they could hold and there were only two left for me. They were thin goats, for they were not overfed on the passage, and besides they were sea-sick. No one would have paid much for them, certainly not what the custom-house demanded, so I just left them on the ship.'

From this halting-point, we tramped through the softening snow-field for an hour to the right moraine, where we halted again, and again lunched. Thence we steered out on to the glacier, driven by crevasses away from the bank to which we returned as soon as we could. Rounding the foot of the hill on our right, and crossing the snout of the Hochjoch glacier, we came about half-past one o'clock to the little inn just in time for lunch in earnest. The sky now clouded over and all the glory went from the day. A heavy curtain hung in the south-west, and the assurance of coming storm was displayed in the sky. It became evident that, if we would reach Vent with dry skins, we must hasten our steps. A good, though undulating path, led down the barren valley. Swollen streams cut across it at frequent intervals and had to be waded. We met numbers of tourists, male and female. They were all Germans and of a different class from the normal travellers in Switzerland. Most carried their own packs. A few were accompanied by guides. They are wont to salute every one they meet, wishing them a pleasant journey. Guides and natives cast at you a gruff but not unkindly '*Gruss Gott.*' We hurried on as fast as our legs would carry us, quickened from moment to moment by spots of rain, the forerunners of a downpour. When we were within a quarter of a mile of Vent, a smart shower drove us for shelter into a tiny chapel which just sufficed to hold us. In a dry moment we ran on to the inn. It was almost full. During the afternoon crowds of tourists kept arriving, till every bed in the village was engaged. The limited resources of the place were stretched to the uttermost to provide food for the hungry crowd. As evening advanced, rain set in in earnest, and all night long a storm raged with rolling thunder. Soundless flashes of soft lightning alternated with forked discharges that split the solid night with thin layers of day. I lay awake unwillingly for hours, suffering from the plague which in small Alpine inns, during the height of the season, murders sleep.

*Aug. 8.*

Again the Fates were kind to us and the worst weather was reserved for our preordained day of rest. The inn at Vent may be described, if any may, as simple, small, and unsophisticated. The 'simple little inn' of romance is a charming place, where all is cleanly, the food 'rough but good,' the welcome warm, the air fresh. But when such a place, or rather, the reality upon which the ideal was founded, is invaded by a horde of tourists, for the most part drawn from the very much lower-middle classes of small south-German towns, it is far from affording comfort even to the unexacting traveller. The fact is, parts of Tirol, though practically free from the herd of English Cook's tourists, are over-run by an even less lovely crowd; and the small and cheap hostelries are, in the season, nightly overpacked with an undesirable multitude, who love closed windows, bad air, and strong coarse food, and who willingly sleep four together in a room barely large enough for one. The activities of the German and Austrian Alpine Club have no doubt opened the mountains to a number of persons who otherwise would not have visited them, and who profit greatly by the exercise, the fine air, the noble views, that Nature provides for all alike; but in so doing, it has made parts of the country unpleasant to travel in. Remembering Tirol as I do, twenty years ago, when there were no huts and few inns—and those never crowded—it is impossible not to wish back the former days.

We left Vent gladly (Aug. 9th) about ten o'clock on a dull morning and walked in cool air down the grassy and soft valley-path towards Sölden. There is nothing remarkable about the scenery for a long distance. The valley is on the whole a poor one and the chalets manifest the depressed condition of its inhabitants. At Zwieselstein the Gurgl valley, the second main branch of the Oetzthal, joins in, and below the junction the scenery improves. The river flows in a wooded gorge, and many great rocks impeding its course break it into pools and

cataracts. The path rises on a picturesque shelf, away from the water, and commands a fine view into the depths and turmoil below. Rounding a corner the vale of Sölden comes into view and there is an immediate change in the aspect of the landscape; for here the houses are large, good, and numerous, and the fields wide. Fertility takes the place of barrenness; the opening valley invites and rewards the industry of man. In little more than three hours from Vent we entered the pleasant verandah of one of the Sölden inns, and found wherewithal to satisfy our rising hunger. We visited the post-office with heavy letters, the weighing and registration of which overtaxed the combined powers of the post-master and his wife; so they handed the business over to us and let us weigh, stamp, and register our letters for ourselves.

About three o'clock we started off again and began mounting the right branch of the Windach Thal. The path is grassy and soft, and the gradient easy and conducive to talk. Aymonod was exceptionally communicative. He had much to say about the leading guides he had known and their personal characters, of the money they had made and saved, the reputation in which they were held by their own folk—quite a different matter from their reputation with travellers,—of their families, their prospects, and the prospects of their children. Of a well-known guide he said: 'He and his family are seventeen in number. I understand he has put by 80,000 francs, which is doing very well. Perhaps that represents the savings of the whole family, but I think not. His sons are turning out well, I believe, though none will become guides like their father. He came at the right moment and knew how to make good use of his opportunities. I have heard a bad account of one of the sons, though I don't know whether it is true. They say that he has not the true love of the mountains. After all,' he playfully remarked, 'that is the great matter. Of a man who is without it, we can only say that he is an unfortunate fellow.'

Conversing thus, we made rapid progress, and the way seemed short. In about an hour and a quarter we reached the log-inn at the Windach Alp, which received us a few minutes before the usual evening rain.

Aug. 10.

Even before the awakener came to us, about four o'clock, I was aware of the dully musical sound of heavy rain falling on the roof. We were delighted to hear that the morning was one for bed rather than mountains. At six they came again to tell us that things looked better, but then we concluded that, as it was too late to do the Zuckerhütl, Wilder Pfaff, and Wilder Freiger in the day and descend to Sterzing, we would await a probable complete clearing and fine weather on the morrow. So on we slept till noon was near at hand. The day really was a fine one. It was the first that we lost on our journey by laziness. We were well paid out for our folly.

Of course as soon as we were up and properly awake we were full of regrets. Yet it would scarcely have been prudent, with no guide book, no clear conception of the route, and only Baedeker's little map, to have launched ourselves into clouds and storm on a long and not wholly easy glacier pass. To employ the afternoon we walked down to Sölden, dined, bought meat at the butcher's (for the Windach Alp inn is innocent of all meat but ham), and returned before the rain began again. We displayed our purchases to Aymonod with somewhat of the trepidation a boy would feel in showing up a questionable exercise.

'It does not seem bad veal,' he said, 'but it is the end of the shoulder and that is exactly the most *maigre* part of the whole beast. You don't understand such things very well, so they imposed upon you.'

We had the good fortune to find Herr Hans Meyer, of Kilimanjaro fame, at the inn, and intending to make the same excursion as ourselves. He had with him two copies of the only decent map I have seen of the Stubai

mountains, and was good enough to give me one of them. With this in our pocket, we could face whatever weather the morrow chose to produce, and at sunset it promised all manner of evil.

*Aug. 11.<sup>1</sup>*

On leaving the inn at half-past five, we went forth into thick fog and rain. Two other parties, intending to take the same route as ourselves and led by local guides, started before us. The path we had to follow, as indicated on the map, was the worst kind of path for foggy weather. At first it keeps along the stream and cannot be lost, but at the Gaissbilder alp it bends gradually away up the hill and divides into many branches, leading to various feeding grounds, so that it becomes useless as a guide. Before reaching the sheep-alp, we noticed that the tracks of our predecessors had ceased. The bad weather changed their plans, as well it might, and they all went over the Bildstöckl pass. Thus we were again reduced to compass and map as guides. The fog was as thick as mountains make, and rain fell so heavily that we were soon wet to the very skin. Water ran down our backs and legs into our boots and poured in little cascades from hats and sleeves.

We rounded gradually up the hill, following the map's indications, but obliged to rely on dead reckoning alone for our position, since none of our maps gave details of hillside form. All we knew for certain was that the Triebenkarlas glacier must be struck at the right corner of its snout, and that its drainage stream flows from the left corner. We must therefore avoid crossing the stream. It seemed ages before we came to what was apparently the old bed of a steep glacier torrent, hemmed

<sup>1</sup> Sonklar Pass. Left Windachalp Inn at 5.30 A.M. Two hours and a half to roping-place by right bank of Triebenkarlas glacier; two hours and a quarter to Sonklar Pass; thirty-five minutes to Müllerhütte; fifty minutes to unroping place below Becher; three-quarters of an hour down rough path and stairs and across foot of Hangender glacier to Teplitz hut; twenty minutes down zigzags to Grohmann's Hut; quarter of an hour to Ober Aglsalm; twenty minutes to Agls-Boden; half an hour to mines; one hour and a half to Mareith.

in by ancient moraines. We crossed it ; rounded the rib beyond, and beheld, close above, the dim vision of ice. Striking therefore up to the left, we climbed on to the crest of a moraine beyond which was certainly ice. It seemed clear that this was the right lateral moraine of the glacier, and the right lateral moraine we had to follow northward, for some little distance. But the compass showed that the moraine trended east and west. It was terminal therefore.

We struck off at right angles to it, over stone-covered ice, and, soon reaching the moraine we wanted, followed it to its emergence from the glacier at the foot of a wall of rock that culminates in the Zuckerhütl. Here for the time our troubles ended, for we had only to hug the foot of the rock wall, steering eastward, and we were bound to hit the ridge dividing our glacier from the Übelthalferner, down which lay the route to Sterzing. Of course in such weather peak-climbing could not be thought of. To cross a pass of 3,327 metres was already enough to tax our energies to the utmost. For an hour or more rain had given place to snow and we were chilled to the bone, but when we had put on the rope the fog thinned. Thus we found our way through a bit of broken glacier, which would have been easy enough but for the coating of new snow that disguised crevasses and bridges, rendering care necessary. Once out on the open glacier, we said, '*nous sommes sauvés*,' like sailors who have brought their ship off a lee-shore out into the open sea. On grass-slopes, with a bad map, it is difficult to steer in a fog, for the right path seldom leads long together in the right direction, and is sure to branch continually ; but on a free snow-field the compass directs with certainty, and all you have to do is to follow it and keep a straight course.

Half-way up the glacier the weather, recognising that we had beaten it, rapidly mended, and the sun even began to shine. The mists cleared away and showed us, not far off and in the direction of our line of march, the

Sonklarscharte—the pass we were to cross. When a névé is deeply covered with new snow, it is impossible to distinguish the faint traces of hidden crevasses, which are always discoverable after a few fine days. We accordingly fell into several in our respective turns and were duly hauled out. Without further incident we reached the *bergschrand* at the foot of the short final slope below the col. We expected to be on the top in five minutes, but the slope kept us for more than half an hour. It consisted of hard ice and higher up of rocks buried in new snow and difficult in that condition. Holding for hands and feet was hard to find and much laborious clearing of their white covering was necessary to reveal the needed cracks and points. Many of the rocks were loose, and a big one, heavy as a man's body, actually forming the edge of the pass, broke away when it was touched and would have damaged us if it could. Before we were on the col, clouds came down again and snow fell heavily. From the Sonklarscharte nothing was visible beyond the rope's length. The white edge of the Übelthalferner was at our feet, sloping away into mere nebula. This glacier is better provided with huts than any other in the Alps. There is the little Müller hut on the crest of the Pfaffennieder, a pass close to ours. Half an hour further is the large Becher hut, then in process of erection, a veritable hotel, built in two stories with many rooms, and inhabited by servants all the summer. Lower still is the Teplitz hut, and below that, near the glacier's foot, the Grohmann hut.

We decided to make at once for the Müller hut and there take shelter and warm our freezing bodies. So we struck off north-east, traversing a steep ice-slope, deeply enough covered with snow to render step-cutting unnecessary. In due time we found the expected arête and, descending to its lowest point, ran against the hut, not a moment too soon for our comfort, alike of body and mind. Cold, buffeted, weary as we were, the little building was a veritable haven. Its door opened easily. Within we

found wood, a small cooking stove, boxes of tinned meat, cakes of soup, a bottle of rum, sugar, tea, plenty of wine, and the necessary pots and things for the preparation and consumption of food. All we had to do was to take what we wanted, write out our bill in a book, sign our names, and pay the money into a box. The prices were extremely cheap and only half-a-florin was required of each employer (nothing from guides) for the use of the hut.

We halted in such excellent quarters for an hour and a half and enjoyed a hot meal. How we blessed the hut-builder in our various tongues! But our destination was still remote, and the small hours of the afternoon were come, so, after cleaning up everything and making the place neater than we found it, we started off again into the milk-white fog. As we descended, it thinned, and when we neared the Becher rocks we could see the surprisingly large hut in process of erection upon them. We hailed the workmen and continued our descent, soon striking into the tracks of the porters who carried up the materials for the building, and thus being led to the elaborately contrived though rough staircase and foot-path which leads past the other two huts to the valley.

The weather now steadily cleared, the clouds rolled splendidly away, the sun shone forth on the silvered world. It was a glorious sight and one full of interest to me. For, nineteen years before, the Übelthal glacier was the scene of my early mountaineering efforts. I was a member of a Cambridge 'reading party,' established at Sterzing for three months in the long vacation of 1875. Where now are you all, O heterogeneous mixture of undergraduates? and thou, O Crystal fountain! whereat we drank mathematical draughts?<sup>1</sup>

Then, the Übelthalferner, with its great ice-fall, its

<sup>1</sup> The tripes verses of the year 1875 thus enshrined the names of the first four wranglers:

'The Scott on his native mountain  
By the Burn-side sits and smiles  
He drinks of the Crystal fountain,  
Nor envies the Lord of the isles.'

wide and crevassed névé, and its surrounding peaks, seemed noblest of all possible glaciers. The Zuckerhütl was our unattainable ideal. There were no huts; the deep lying Aglsalm shelter was the highest possible starting-point. The only guides were a few chamois hunters who seemed never to be disengaged. We were a real *reading* party and did not permit ourselves more than a day and a half out, at most once a week. The weather generally turned bad on the second day of our brief outings. Again and again I slept with a companion and some axe-less guide at the wretched alp, but never did we reach the Zuckerhütl, and now I was robbed of it again. We did climb the Wilder Freiger, which alone now refused to show its head to us or shake its flanks free of cloud. We climbed the Botzer too, by its crooked snow arête, and crossed the pass west of it, hurrying down to S. Leonard the same day and to Botzen the next, fairly tired to death. Where art thou, O Baedeker Pearson, companion of that tramp? Those were days indeed! What ascents were ever so triumphant? And now the clouds were lifting and revealing the sun-lit landscape of years ago. It had not paled in beauty; nay, it had gained. My memory in no sense flattered it. The Übelthal névé, and the ice-fall below it, are to be numbered amongst the finest, though not the largest in the Alps. Fortunate, indeed, had we been to chance upon so beautiful a training ground. As the light swept from the lowering sun over the snowfield, so gracefully curving, it caught the tops of the highest line of séracs, and cast the steep ice-fall into shadow, whilst the mountains stood around girt in clouds, or flying cloud-banners from their crests. Descending, we had this view, changing as we sank, ever before us. How many a reminiscence it recalled of pleasant hours and friendly companionship!

At the lowest hut the marked retreat of the glacier became apparent. We used to walk over the ice where now is a mere waste of stones. We plunged into the river gorge, gloomy and grand, and came, in the depths of

it, where the waters roar loudest, to the shepherd's hut. It is not the old hut wherein we used to sleep. That was long and narrow, but the present hut is square. Below opened the green Ridnaun valley, or rather a fascinating glimpse of it beneath clouds. We hurried down the well-made path, so different from the old vague sheep-track, passing by the way a local guide seated on the ground and counting his money. He grabbed his notes in terror as we went by. The way led across the floor of an old lake basin, surrounded by steep green slopes broken by wet precipices of blue rock over which tumbled a number of waterfalls. The mouth of the cirque is blocked with a forest-covered mound, beneath which the stream finds exit through a narrow gorge.

'It would amuse me,' said some one, 'to block that gorge across with a dam.'

We turned the corner and there was the dam, built of massive rocks, with water-gates in it, perhaps to regulate the flow of the river which has often devastated the lower valley with floods.

Below the dam came the loveliest valley-path imaginable, winding through beautiful trees over ground broken by mossy rocks, half buried in tangles of fern and other wild plants. A vagrant path it is, that keeps to a gully away from the river and twists and turns with infinite changefulness. It is good to have learnt something in nineteen years. The unusual beauty of this path escaped me in those eager days, when the snows were so attractive that everything seemed tedious below them. Now, I wandered down, entranced, and saw with regret the level valley floor approach. At the edge of the flat we turned a corner and beheld a frightful disfigurement—the whole paraphernalia of a mining establishment on a large scale, with smoking chimneys, hideous buildings, and a brown dust and scum over everything, bringing death to all neighbouring trees. Heavy rain began to fall, so we took refuge from it in a foul shed belonging to the mines. A

broad and mathematically level road leads away from the place and forms its single redeeming feature. We followed this, when the rain stopped, and marvelled that it does not go down hill. An hour along it we met a wayfarer who warned us that it only leads to a funicular truck-railway, which we might not descend, so we cut off down the hillside near Ridnaun and followed the old stony way to Mareith.

The sun had set by the time we reached Mareith and the evening was drawing in. Moreover we were tired out. The post-office would be closed at Sterzing; why should we trouble to go further when an inn labelled by the German and Austrian Club offered us its hospitality? The temptation was too strong. We yielded and were well satisfied to have done so.

*Aug. 12.*

Our halt at Mareith was disastrous after all. A domestic fiend put my boots too near the kitchen fire and burnt the side of one of them to a cinder.

As we were sitting down to breakfast, an old lady came in and rushed to embrace FitzGerald. He escaped her, but it needed some agility.

‘I beg your pardon,’ she said, ‘I thought you were my husband.’

Presently the aged and stout husband appeared—a very different figure!

It was still early when we drove into Sterzing, leaving behind us a valley, filled at its head with heavy clouds which were pouring rain even on to Mareith. We drew up at the Krone inn, the abode of our reading-party in 1875. Sterzing in those days was one of the most picturesque places imaginable, almost the same as it appears in a print dated 1620. But, in the Müller hut, the sole literature of that lofty retreat, I found a little Sterzing guide-book, issued by the Society for the Beautifying of Sterzing, and I trembled to think what might have happened under such patronage. My fears were groundless. The place is unchanged. There are no new houses

in the picturesque main street, the old irregular fronts with their bay windows, their wrought iron signs, their vaulted portals and cavernous basements remain as they were. The Krone too was unaltered. I found my old room and looked from the window whence I once laboriously sketched the view, which now I photographed; all was as of yore, except the people. Marie was gone—married, living in Innsbruck, and the mother of a large family. The old host was dead, and his son, grown old and fat, reigns in his stead. All the folk we knew are dead.

At the post-office surprises awaited us. FitzGerald was called to London, so we had plenty to arrange. I decided to continue the journey without Aymonod and Carrel, in order to give the Gurkhas an opportunity of acting as independent guides. Thus for a few hours we were busy. We said good-bye to our excellent Italians, the charm of whose characters and the excellence of whose manners had made their company always delightful. We took the northward train, the southward, they. Our train started first. The Gurkhas and I quitted it in half an hour at Brennerbad, where we waved farewell to FitzGerald, who was carried on alone.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ZILLERTHAL AND VENEDIGER GROUPS

*Aug. 13.*

THE weather continued bad. Two winds were blowing overhead, one from a northerly point, the other from a southerly, but the warm wind was stronger and covered all the sky with a dead grey roof. After sending off my bag by post, we left comfortable Brennerbad about nine o'clock and struck up a good zigzag path that leads past various alps to the Schlüsseljoch. As we rose, various Oetzthal peaks came into view, clear beneath the roof of cloud. The Stubai mountains followed, with the long wall of the Sonklarspitze in their midst. It was, however, a dull walk, for the view was all behind; only rolling grass-slopes spread before us as we walked steadily up to the pass. There a fine south-eastward view burst upon us, a range of hills whitened with new snow and stretching from the Hochfeiler on the left to the Wilde Kreuz Spitze. The latter mountain I had good reason to remember, for once, when I essayed to climb it, such a storm of wind and thunder overtook me, that it rattles and rages in my memory still.

Grass-slopes lead down so steeply from the col, that we were able to glissade many of them, and the better for a glazing of wet. The strain, however, found out my scorched boot. Its side cracked up like a biscuit, so that I cursed the silly old woman to whom its ruin was due. A few hundred feet below the pass the view becomes fine, for the long straight green valley opens and, drawing the mountain outlines together, unites them

into a striking composition. The straightness of the valley emphasised the regularity of the mountain ribs that descend into it, each starting jagged from a snowy point, then rounding into a continuous curve, and finally spreading wide under a covering of forest to the grassy valley floor. The Hochferner, rising by the saddle at the valley end, dominated the view and looked far more imposing with its overhanging glacier-brow than its mere altitude would suggest.

We ran down the rest of the way to Kematen and began inquiring for shoemakers. Yes, there were shoemakers at Kematen, but all were out for the day; we had better go on to S. Jacob, where several more dwell. So we walked on to that place, pausing only at the outskirts to photograph a life-size and most realistic Crucifixion with which the Gurkhas were not impressed.

The people of this valley are fond of realistic religious sculpture on a large scale. We passed several newly erected chapels containing life-size wooden figures painted up to life. It is curious that this form of religious art should now find its home on the southern slopes of the Alps and nowhere else. To analyse the social and climatic conditions to which it is due, would be an interesting exercise for any student of the natural-history of art.

At S. Jacob, again, all the shoemakers seemed to be out for the day, so I gave my split boot to a bare legged and footed child, telling him to have it mended quickly. He vanished, and I sat down hopefully to lunch. After two or three hours, the boot came back, patched, apparently, with a bit of glove, which of course broke up next day.

When at last we could quit the noisy inn of S. Jacob, (which I did without regret), rain began to fall. Looking down the valley we saw heavy clouds advancing up towards us. There were all the signs of coming down-pour. We started off, however, for the Wiener hut, accepting the inevitable ducking rather than to spend



NEAR S. JACOB IN THE PFITSCHERTHAL



a night in S. Jacob's foul hostelry. I believe the way was pretty from the start, but for the first forty minutes I was not sufficiently reconciled to the rain to enjoy its charm. A dry place under a big tree by an open glade and an additionally heavy downpour arriving together, I took refuge in the one from the other. The situation was charming. The trees were prettily ranged about; the grass was smooth as a well-kept lawn and bright with wet; a stream went babbling by, and the sound of a woodman's axe rang through the wood. There was nothing to prevent one's perfect enjoyment save a foreboding that brought imaginary troubles from the future into the present. The fact was that I had only the vaguest idea of where the Wiener hut might be, and only Baedeker's little map for guide. The hut was certainly enveloped in clouds, and snow would already be falling about it. It might be hard to find. They said it was five good hours' walk from S. Jacob. By that reckoning we should not reach it before eight o'clock at the night's edge. I did not really believe there would be any trouble, but it required a forcible wrench to withdraw my mind from gloomy forecasts and fix it on present beauty. Happiness generally consists in ignoring the future; but time is the mind's fourth dimension. A three dimension intelligence is characteristic of the lower animals.

The path mounted a woody step in the valley, down which the river races in wild cascades. It is one of those picturesque paths which trees overshadow and rocks diversify. Nothing is nastier than a stony path. Loose stuff slips under the foot, whilst the fixed lumps trip you up. But when the stones are large and firm, they form a rough staircase, and the path has to wind continually to adapt itself to the larger, moss- and lichen-covered masses. A beautiful foreground is thus produced, and the path itself becomes an element of beauty. Above the pretty staircase the ways divide. Ours turned off at right angles and crossed the stream to reach the right bank of the Unterberger valley, which we were to follow to its

head. A few yards beyond the bridge came a set of hay-huts. I remembered them well, for on the last occasion of my coming this way, nineteen years before, we opened one of them, crawled into it, and slept. Perhaps it was the very one where now we found a youthful native and his girl taking refuge from the rain and enjoying the best of good times. Those were the days before club-huts invaded the Zillerthal, and when guides were not, and ice-axes were unknown.

The narrowing path led straight on, up the right bank of our valley. The grass on either side had not been cut; it overhung the narrow track so that our legs brushed through it. It was slender graceful grass, tufted at the ends, and all the tufts were wet. We knocked the cold water off them, and so soaked our stockings that rivers flowed into our boots. How annoying a small discomfort may become if it continues long enough! Thus far various inscribed boards had indicated the way. Most, it is true, are placed in situations where no doubt could arise, but some were useful. Half an hour up the Unterbergerthal we came to a really doubtful point and there was no board to help. On our left (the right bank) were cliffs, which a faintly zigzag track rose to avoid. On our right was the river, bridged by a massive old snow avalanche; a new and well marked track led down to this and another up from it on the far side. It seemed scarcely probably that the Austrian Alpine Club, which had thus far shown so much interest in our guidance, would abandon us here. We concluded that the new cut track to the avalanche-bridge must be of their making and decided to follow it. In so doing we went wrong. Track-makers for travellers should remember that they do more harm than good unless they give clear directions at points where ways divide.

As it was, we took to the left bank of the stream and mounted a steep grass-slope to a kind of col, whence we had to descend a couple of hundred feet into a deeply enclosed basin, once occupied by the snout of the Glieder glacier. Track of any sort there soon was none. We

crossed the stream again and stumbled for an hour or so round slopes of big broken débris and up the right moraine of the Glieder glacier. Rain now gave place to snow, which a cold wind blew against our backs. We entered the clouds and hurried forward to keep warm. Presently there came a cave in the mists and we beheld, close at hand and slightly above us, the beautiful sérac snout of the Weisskar glacier. It is a stoneless stream of purest ice, which splits at its foot into towers and walls of blue and white. These break off, when their turn comes, and tumble in fine avalanches on to the flat place of stones which we were crossing. The true path to the hut was here recovered. It was for some distance buried under ice-avalanches—an indication that the Weisskar glacier is advancing.

Clouds enclosed us again, snow fell more heavily, and the wind grew strong; we cared little for these annoyances, the hut being near at hand. Our satisfaction, however, was premature. The path disappeared under the new snow leaving no trace for our guidance. So we pounded on up hill, in a merely hopeful state of mind, keeping to the crest of a sort of ridge, from which the extreme limit of vision was some thirty yards. Within the circle of this at last appeared the vague outline of the hut, all white with driven snow. Smoke was coming from its chimney, for which we were thankful, as indeed we had every reason to be, for our predecessors had been obliged to work two hours, with doors and windows open before the stove would draw. The hut was provided with tinned meats, tea, sugar, wine, and the like conveniences, and—what was more to the point—with excellent company, so that we spent a pleasant evening.

*Aug. 14.<sup>1</sup>*

All night long the gale raged with a violence that

<sup>1</sup> Hoch Feiler (3523 m.). Left the Wiener Hut at 9.15. One hour and a half up rocks on the right side of the Gliederferner and over snow to the south-west arête, ten minutes below the top; one hour, twenty minutes to the Lower Weisszint Pass (3020 m.); one hour to the Eisbruckjoch; three-quarters of an hour to the lower Neves Alp; three-quarters of an hour to the upper Neves Alp; twenty-five minutes to the hut on the Neveser Sattel (3010 m.).

increased as the hours advanced. No one spoke of an early start. The windows were choked with snow, which found its way in through every crack and made the guides' loft anything but a warm chamber. When I looked forth, about seven o'clock, snow was no longer falling and the low clouds were gone. The landscape was white to the stony basin far below. Every rock was plastered with snow and edged with filaments pointing windward. Overhead heavy clouds raced from the north; for the north wind, enraged by the constant southern pressure, was driving back its enemy with impetuous force. The local guides, two of whom were in the hut, professed to be sanguine about the immediate future and foretold a rapid clearance; so we ate a leisurely breakfast and left matters to develop as they pleased.

The Wiener hut stands above the right bank of the Gliederferner, on a shelf which curves down from the south-west arête of the Hochfeiler, the highest of the Zillerthal mountains. The summit of the peak is only two hours above the hut, and, to make matters easier, there is another little hut of refuge ten minutes below the summit. When I climbed the mountain in 1875 it was, of course (such is my general luck), covered with cloud, and I saw nothing of its fine panorama: I was only therefore desirous of again ascending if a view was to be had.

A little past nine o'clock I started with the Gurkhas. Our companions of the night followed. A few yards showed the kind of work in store for us. I believe there is a path from the hut, leading for some distance up a ridge of broken rocks. We saw no trace of path, and only here and there a point or two of rock. The hillside was so deeply covered with snow that, when we sank into it up to the knee, and in places almost up to the waist, we did not touch the ground. Easy rocks were supplanted by one of the most fatiguing snow-slopes I can remember. We toiled up it for more than an hour, sheltered by a ridge on our left from the fury of the wind,

and thus, gradually rounding to the north, with the fine snow basin of the Gliederfern on our right, came in view of our peak. It was evident to me that an ascent was impossible. A furious gale from the north was sweeping the arête, which we should presently reach, and up which the ascent had to be completed. The wind cut across the edge, curved over, and came curling back, picking up the new snow and whirling it aloft in eddies, till it came high enough to be carried away, like a cloud, by the main stream of the gale. The fine snow, thus whirling and dancing in the air and brightened by the sunlight, resembled clouds of midges, whose flickering inner motion produces so gay an effect. As long as we were sheltered from the gale, we could enjoy the beauties that accompanied it, but the moment we touched the ridge, enjoyment ceased. The wind struck us like a solid thing, and we had to lean against it or be overthrown. It lulled for an instant and we advanced a few yards; then it struck us again, and we gripped the mountain and doubted whether we could hold on. A far milder wind than this would suffice to sweep men from a narrow arête. It was not only strong, but freezing. It dissolved the heat out of us so rapidly that we could almost feel ourselves crystallising, like so many Lot's wives. We stood up to it for a minute or two, then rushed back into shelter and took stock of our extremities. My finger tips had lost all sensation. Amar Sing's toes had premonitions of returning frost-bite. It was enough. The Hochfeiler may be the easiest mountain in the Alps, but that day it would have killed us all. The upper hut, though scarcely a hundred yards off, was inaccessible.

We descended to the nearest rocks and looked back at our peak. A few clouds of driven snow raced over it and curled down the lee-side with a perfect grace of motion. Southward above the Lower Weisszintjoch, which was now our goal, all the Dolomite range stood forth in jagged distinction, and of a light transparent blue that the very heavens might envy. The rounded snowy

Marmolata, amongst and above them, seemed placed where it stands, with a true æsthetic intention, for emphasis and contrast.

At this point we quitted our friendly companions, who returned to the hut, whilst we bent our steps down to the Glieder snow-field. It contains a maze of crevasses, which were disguised by the deep new snow and required to be carefully negotiated; but the Gurkhas, leading alternately, found out every one as we came to it. We reached the col without incident and were soon in the warmth of a southern shelter, basking in the sun.

There are two saddles of equal height, separated by a tooth of rock and both giving access to the same valley. Acting on the advice of the local guides, who were obliging to us, we chose the right-hand col; but the other would have been better. The descent from it lies down fairly steep but easy rocks, whilst from the right hand col one has to go down a wearisome slope of débris, where in 1875 was a small crevassed glacier. In either case one must bend round to the left and traverse slopes of broken rock to the low and usually grassy Eisbruckjoch, which this day was white with snow. The Dolomites remained before us throughout this portion of our way, and the indigo of the Eisbruck lake at our feet was a fortunate contrast to their ethereal blue. We had left the edge of the cloud-covering behind, and only a few fragments, truant from the northern mass and glad to be free, floated peacefully over the blue hills to the south.

The remainder of our way was dull and eventless. From the Eisbruckjoch we saw the almost equally high Neves Pass with the hut on it, where we were to sleep. We must descend a stony valley to the flat alp below, cross a stream by jumping, where it was divided into many channels, and re-ascend another stony path to the hut. A new and larger cabane, almost a small hotel, was in process of erection beside the old, which served as a dwelling for the workmen. They were gruff and unsavoury companions, but we made the best of them. The



ADAMS

ASCENDING THE HOCHFELLER



idea that we, including the Gurkhas, were other than Tirolese, did not penetrate their dense heads till next morning, when it occurred to one of them as an inspiration. Just before we were leaving they thawed a little, hoping for a tip.

Why this place should be chosen for a cabane, of the inn sort, I cannot understand. The approaches to the col on both sides are dull; the situation is not remarkable; the views are not specially fine. Ambitious club-sections, I suppose, find few good situations for huts unoccupied. The best have long been appropriated. If, instead of building a new hut, the old one had been renovated and good paths made to it, I think that would have been wiser. Tirol almost suffers from a plethora of huts, but the paths to many of them are abominable. We were disappointed on arrival to find no store of provisions, so that our needs had to be supplied out of our own reduced resources.

*Aug. 15.*

If any short-story teller thinks 'A Haunted Cabane' a subject likely to suit his style, I recommend him to spend a night at the Neves hut and record his experiences. The place is overrun with mice, which dwell in the straw that serves for common bed. With the coming of night, the straw begins to rustle in the creepiest fashion. Presently the soft little beasts, getting bolder, run about over the sleepers. One made a mere highway of my face. At an earlier stage of our journey, when my skin was tender, I should have resented the familiarity, but now it rather amused me. A mouse entered my sleeping bag, and, as I gathered, regretted having done so, and found some difficulty in discovering an exit. The workmen and Gurkhas slept in the loft, and, when they turned over, the boards creaked and grumbled mysteriously in the dark. There were other sounds for which I could not account in my sleepy condition. A more imaginative person would easily have seen hair-curling sights to match them. I, alas! saw nothing till morning came, and the sun

streamed in at the windows. Then indeed I did see what surprised me. It was Karbir busy stirring a pot over the stove. I thought we had eaten every bit of our food the night before. What he could have found to cook was a mystery to me. The best way to solve it was to get up and look. Of the two pots on the fire, one contained water, in which I was destined to wash, the other 'soup.' The soup was compounded of a few remnants of brown bread broken small, a remainder of milk, shreds of cheese, and the least suspicion of butter. It turned out excellent—at all events I was hungry enough to find it so.

The meal finished, we started down a rough and disagreeable path. The Venediger mountains ahead were belted and crowned with clouds, but sunlight struck broadly through between belt and crown, producing a noble effect of light and shade. After nearly two hours' wearisome descent we reached the simple inn at Weissenbach and halted for breakfast. Nothing is more tiring than to begin the day by going down hill. Fortunately there was no hard work before us.

The S. Jacob cobbler's patch broke loose on the Weisszintjoch, so the search for a cobbler recommenced. We were told of one at Weissenbach, but he was not forthcoming; so we tramped down to Luttach and found an artist of the required type. I ran him to earth in his own house, explained what was to be done, and set Amar Sing to watch that it was done well and to have his own boots cobbled in their turn; from the inn I despatched a litre of wine to the pair to take the place of conversation.

After lunching at Luttach, we travelled away in an Einspänner, for fifteen miles or more of valley separated us from Kasern, where the night was to be spent. Of course, now that the fine weather was useless to us, the sun poured furiously on our heads and backs and made us long for clouds. The wind was going round to the south-west, so that we had no comfort in looking for-

ward to a continuance of clear skies. The folk of the Ahrenthal seem unusually devoted to such religious art as their means and taste can attain. Almost every house is decorated with its painted Madonna, and in most gardens, and often by the wayside, are carved and painted Crucifixions in little tabernacles. Many were decorated with branches of green, bearing red berries, or with poppies, or other red flowers.

Karbir sat beside the driver and established relations with him. He became possessed of the whip before we had gone far and used it to rub the flies off the horse. A gift of tobacco led to a transfer of the reins, so that we all got along together amicably enough. The valley is pretty, in a general sort of way, but not above the average, save at one place where it narrows to a gorge. The sky was of an unusually clear and light blue colour, and the river, instead of being muddy, after the fashion of glacier torrents, was almost transparent, thanks to the quantity of fresh snow melting in the hot day, which raised the waters to the brim of their bed. After driving about four hours we came to abandoned copper-mines on the outskirts of Kasern. Dismissing our vehicle and shouldering our packs, we walked up the hill to the simplest and least attractive of Tirolese inns.

Appearances belied it, however, for the folk who kept it are hearty and obliging. The beds are clean. The food is good and served in a finely wainscoted room, which has remained unaltered, save by the mellowing hand of time, since it was built in 1613. With the night, clouds came rolling over from the south-west, and the forecast of bad weather was renewed.

*Aug. 16.<sup>1</sup>*

Some day or other, when meteorology becomes a

<sup>1</sup> Left Kasern at 7.30 A.M. Two hours and a half by path to the Birnlücke; half an hour down to left moraine of the Krimmler Kees; half an hour across it; quarter of an hour up path to Warnsdorfer hut; half an hour up to edge of snow; quarter of an hour to Krimmler Thörl; one hour down snow and across glacier to foot of rocks of right bank; twelve minutes up rocks to Kürsinger hut.

more developed science, and a knowledge of its terminology filters down to the level of the intelligent public, it will be possible to talk or write about clouds and be understood. At present, when one has exhausted cirrus, stratus, cumulus, nimbus and their hyphenated permutations and combinations, one has come to the end of a non-specialist's vocabulary and of the ordinary reader's comprehension. But the clouds that enveloped the hills, when we started away at half-past seven o'clock to cross the Birnlücke, were none of these. They were soft clouds, like grey cotton wool drawn out loose and packed against ridges and peaks. Those we ultimately entered felt dry, and were opaque. When we were immediately below them, they produced a most sombre effect. One hung loose from its peak, whose shadow was so projected on it, that at a first glance it looked double. The little lawn outside the inn was cropped by geese to the closest and finest turf imaginable. Have geese been tried as lawn-croppers in England?

Our walk to the pass was uneventful. The col was always visible ahead, and a good path with plenteous sign-posts leads to it. Only once was there the smallest doubt about the way, and there some wag, with even less humour than brains, had turned the sign-post in the wrong direction; still it would have taken a greater idiot than himself to have been misled. The curiously straight valley passes through stages of slowly progressive wildness to the snow-slope on the pass. They call it four to five hours' walk from Kasern to the top. We did it, going slowly, in two hours and a half. Before entering the clouds we looked back down the long thal, but the view is not beautiful. So much the more striking by contrast was the surprise of the Krimmler glacier, which burst through the mist when we had descended a short way to the east—the splendid ghost of a mountain cirque enveloped in a wide glacial cascade as grand and conveying as great an impression of vastness as the famous cirque of Saas-Fee. It is not really comparable

to that for absolute size, but its lines are so noble, its masses so well divided and proportioned, that it imposes a sense of magnitude upon the eye, which credits it with a greater extension and altitude than it actually possesses. The only dwarfing feature was the Warnsdorfer hut, visible below the Krimmler Thörl, on the opposite slope. Its windows gave a measure for its size and enabled its distance to be judged, wherefrom the true scale of the whole amphitheatre could be deduced. We walked easily down in half an hour to the left moraine of the glacier below, passing on the way a flock of the goats, brown like well-coloured meerschaums, which are characteristic of this region. Leaving the duffers' way on our left hand, we struck across the easy glacier and in half an hour began mounting a zigzag path which led in a few minutes to the excellent Warnsdorfer hut.

This was the first specimen I saw of the modern elaborate German and Austrian Club-huts. Its like does not exist out of Tirol. It is really an inn, built in two stories. It has dining-room, kitchen, and various bedrooms. A clean little woman lives in it all the summer and does cooking and service. The traveller can procure a hot meal of fresh meat and the like at any time. He can have a fire in his bedroom! He can buy wine and liqueurs. There is a substantial game of nine-pins outside the door. There are tables with table-cloths, beds with sheets, books, clocks, barometer, a post-box, maps, a guitar, looking-glasses, and all conceivable fittings. The house is built of wood and kept almost too warm. Such is the modern type of hut, which the rivalry of the Sections of the German and Austrian Alpine Club has generated. The charges made for the use of it, even to outsiders, are most moderate. You could live in it for a week at less cost than you can spend a night at the Grands Mulets, whilst between the accommodation of the two places there is no comparison whatever. The wretched Mont Blanc shelter would not be tolerated in Tirol by a third-rate D. u. Oe. A. V. Section.

There was a delightful old German gentleman staying in the hut. I fell into conversation with him, and he read me a lecture.

‘You young (*sic*) fellows,’ he said, ‘are always in too much of a hurry. Why don’t you spend the night here like me? You can’t see the view properly because of the clouds on the tops of the peaks. Wait here till you do see it and then move on. You have no time, you say, and have more mountains you want to climb. I tell you that is nonsense. You appear to be a free man; I am a slave, I have only ten more days’ leave, but I mean to spend them well and not to race around, passing beautiful scenes without seeing them. Climb fewer mountains, but see those you do climb. Getting to the top of peaks is not everything or indeed anything. The enjoyment of beauty is the sole excuse for your travel. But I see you won’t take my advice. Wisdom only comes with age.’

After a good lunch and a long halt, we started again and walked up the path behind the hut. The glacier scenery around us was superb, but it would be better seen by one descending. In half an hour we came to snow, which scarcely involved the use of the rope, though we put it on for form’s sake. Twenty minutes brought us to the easy Krimmler Thörl, where the broad Venediger, with its three arêtes, bursts upon the view, in the midst of a great cirque of snow, edged by splintered rock-walls. Clouds just capped the peak but did not diminish its effect. It is only 3660 metres high, but it possesses the grandeur of the larger mountains in the Central Alps.

There was no time to loiter about, for the storm was shaking over us a black aegis of cloud, from which we instinctively ran. An hour brought us down a long series of snow-slopes, over a bit of moraine and across the Ober Sulzbach glacier, just above its ice fall. A path on its right bank leads up to the Kürsinger hut. A few drops of rain falling on us, and the sight of a grey rain-besom rapidly approaching, quickened our steps, and we ran as

fast as we could (in twelve minutes—a record, I expect) up to the hut. The gale broke upon it two minutes after we had entered, and some travellers who arrived ten minutes later were soaked.

We found the place occupied by a pleasant party whose conversation sank to wide-mouthed silence when the three of us burst panting into their midst. For a measurable interval not a word was spoken, till a quaint old fellow broke silence with the remark directed at the Gurkhas, ‘Stout lads!’ Thereupon everybody thawed. The Gurkhas made themselves even more agreeable and merry than usual and won the heart of the kindly woman who looks after the place, as well as of the guides already in possession. A brisk conversation started amongst them and Karbir’s laugh and frequent ‘Yah! yah!’ filled up gaps for the rest of the day. Most of the guides retired to the loft where they sang and jodelled charmingly. The quaint man (who kept me in cigars during my stay) was delighted with the music.

‘These people,’ he said, ‘and the Bavarians retain memory of our true old German songs, which we in the plains have lost.’

From music he passed to beer, a subject sure to interest a German company.

‘Munich beer,’ he remarked, ‘is doubtless excellent, when you get it fresh and cool in Munich. But their export-beer is not good. There is no export-beer like English pale ale. Pale ale *ist ein Welt-Bier*.’

‘Pale ale is no doubt very good,’ commented one of two intelligent looking priests, who were waiting to climb the Venediger, ‘but you must get accustomed to it, as I did a couple of years ago in London. At first when I took a drink of it, it gave me a shiver, but it warms the inside when it gets down. Three good glasses are as much as one cares to drink. On the whole, though, I prefer stout. Stout makes a man strong.’

After this I fell out of the conversation and became immersed in maps and guide books, which were freely

lent to me on all hands. Thus the evening advanced and soon all were busy with their various dinners, which the good woman served with a hospitality of manner that made amends for any simplicity of material. She said the best she could for her viands, especially commending the pork. 'It is from an excellent pig, a little one and quite young, only killed yesterday. I hope you will find it nice. A good appetite to you!'

*Aug. 18.*

The company assembled in the hut consisted of ten climbers with their guides. All intended to make the ascent of the Gross Venediger. But during the night the weather settled down to such elaborate ill-condition that no one attempted to start. I left orders to be called when the first party started from the hut. The fact that I was permitted to sleep till broad daylight sufficiently indicated the position of affairs. I was not, however, allowed to slumber as late as would have been pleasant, for the company became restless at a foolishly early hour and imposed wakefulness upon the most sluggish. One by one they melted away as the morning advanced. They donned their gaiters and cloaks, went forth into the driving snow, and were lost to view.

It is a common-place reflection that a man's apparent momentary character varies with the society in which he is cast. It has sometimes seemed to me that, when two men meet and enter into communication with one another, a third creature may be conceived of as arising, wherein their two personalities are merged. What is true of two, is true likewise of many, where mutual communion is established; they generate by their assemblage a sort of social individual whose image would be their composite photograph, allowance made for the preponderance of the stronger characters. This composite individual has a character of his own. One never meets the same twice. He lives as long as the assemblage lasts; the dissolution of the bond that unites his component parts involves his death. If one human factor goes and another comes,

the resultant composite personage changes. Sometimes he is a dull dog ; sometimes a surly one. Sometimes he is intellectual, sometimes silent, sometimes gay.

When two men have met in the company of a number, they often receive and retain pleasant impressions of one another which are rudely dispelled when they afterwards meet or are left alone. A man may be the salt of a composite creature, but a bore taken alone. A friend that we receive to our bosom on some happy occasion, may not really be the living individual who sits next to us, but the invisible composite creature, the spirit of the whole assemblage, for which we have mistaken him. It was that that pleased us, not any of the company. As a rule, we like a man, not for what he is, but for the double personage he makes in combination with ourselves. The spirit of the Kürsinger hut, as I found him, was an excellent fellow. His life was brief but happy. Now the component elements of his body are scattered, and he is dead ; as dies an individual man, when the component living cells, whose union created and whose changes altered him, sunder and break up.

I was left alone with an old photographer, an excellent companion. He was a naval officer in his youth, but for thirty years has wandered through the mountains, taking the views by which he has earned no inconsiderable reputation. Practice has made him perfect in patiently enduring the whims and fancies of the weather. No idea of going down occurred to him. ' I shall stay here till the weather is fine and the new snow cleared away. It is useless taking a photograph of a mountain landscape under new snow. People won't buy it. They want things as they are accustomed to see them, though to this there are exceptions. For instance, no one will buy a photograph of Salzburg without snow on the Untersberg, yet they want the trees in leaf though they never see snow there in summer. It is seldom one finds that view in the right condition to be photographed for the public taste. A few days from now there will be fine weather,

and I shall go up the Gross Venediger and take my photographs. There is no hurry. I can sit.'

He was a very dramatic old gentleman and said his say always with gesture and shout, looking one full in the face, with his chin poked forwards, and alternately grinning and looking savage without special reference to what he was saying. We discussed together the *menu* of our various meals, and he gave elaborate instructions to the cook for the exact preparation of the simplest dishes. Only the weather he would not discuss, which was a mercy, for there was so much of it, and all bad in various ways, that it would have formed an endless and wearisome topic. Once turning to me suddenly, he said: 'I think I know what you have been. You have been a sailor. No? Well, I should have taken you for one. Why is it that you English are generally morose and reserved? Only your sailors, as a rule, are open and free. That is what I like about your Gurkhas. They are bright, joyous, friendly fellows, and then how strong they are! I was a sailor and I don't mind saying I was a good one, but I was a bad soldier; I was not well disciplined. Discipline is the great thing for soldiers, and some folk (most in fact) can never be properly disciplined; they are not capable of it. That's what people forget nowadays with their big armies. I should not like to be in the next war. What with big armies and socialistic ideas, and a lot of pedantic school-masters for reserve officers, I expect there will be a pretty mess. It is easy enough to summon a great army together, but to break it up again is another matter. How are they going to feed such multitudes? There will be the Landwehr in some places with nothing to eat, and don't you suppose they will just take what they want, or try to? But the Landsturm of that locality won't stand by and see their stuff eaten up. Instead of bothering about the enemy they will just fall upon one another. Or think, when the war is over and all industry is destroyed, if you try to disband your army, it is an army of workmen

for whom there is no immediate work. Do you suppose they will sit down and starve? Not a bit. That was to my thinking the chief cause of the Commune War in Paris. The workmen had no work ready to hand, so they fought.'

Thus my aged friend gave rein to his imagination by the hour together, throwing his arms about, trudging up and down the room, or stamping on the floor. He shouted all he had to say as though he were on the quarter-deck. 'I have always had a good voice,' he explained; 'when I was on deck the men heard my orders, I can tell you. But those were days of sailing ships—the good old days. A sailing ship was something fine, something beautiful. You could make her do exactly what you wanted, but with a steamer there is always the element of luck. She is not under the same perfect control. There is far less interest in seafaring in these days of steam. It is the same with photography since the introduction of the dry-plate process. It has become tame. Formerly, when it needed such delicacy and skill, it was a real delight.'

*Aug. 18.*

The second day of our imprisonment happened to be the Austrian Emperor's birthday. My old friend awoke me with the news, after I had slept the clock round. He was in high spirits. We must all drink the Emperor's health in champagne. A man must be sent down with a telegram of congratulation. He should also take my letters and post them. I should pay for the champagne. 'Look you! our Emperor is a good man, and withal a merry. He understands a joke. If he knew that we had drunk his health up here in the snow, he would be pleased, but if he also knew that we had made an Englishman pay, if he knew that Austrians had drunk his health at a foreigner's cost, that would really delight him.'

There were seven of us to take part in the function and he would photograph us in the act. He ranged us out-

side the hut door, the cook, the porters, the Gurkhas and me, each with glass in hand, which we were to raise when he gave the word. He posed us with much energy, dancing about with impatience, because the Gurkhas would stand at 'attention,' looking at him instead of at the neighbours with whom they were intended to clink glasses. He snatched the pipe out of a porter's mouth saying, 'Blockhead! how can you be supposed to be drinking a toast with a yard of pipe-stem in your mouth?'

At last the groups were taken, and then I took him, beside his camera, glass in hand; after which we drank each other's healths in a general toast and retired again into the hut to thaw.

With the writing of letters and journals and the consumption of food (we embarked on pig number two) the second day passed quicker than the first. There were no posts to bring trouble, no callers, no worries; there was nothing to be observed, noted down, or remembered. One could turn one's mind out to grass without compunction. No one came up from the valley to add himself to our number. The evening closed with the wind howling louder and the snow falling thicker than ever.

*Aug. 19.*

The third day of our confinement passed more rapidly and even less eventfully than the others. On a first rest-day, one fills up journals; the second day goes to letter-writing; the third has to be employed in sewing on buttons. But as the amount of possible employment diminishes, habit induces patience and compensation is afforded. It is a mistake to expect after three bad days that the fourth will be better. Experience shows weather to go in runs. Snow fell most of the morning, but about noon the clouds broke and fragments of sunshine strewed the glacier. For a brief time we even saw the Venediger. The wind went round to the north, the barometer slowly rose, and with it our hopes. But

at sunset black skies gathered again, and the outlook was bad as ever. When the lamps were lit, Karbir took a dancing lesson from one of the local guides, whilst another played on a whistle, but Amar Sing looked on with his usual dignified reserve.

*Aug. 20.<sup>1</sup>*

If we had been consistent we should have remained this day also at the Kürsinger hut. But the whim took me to start, and about half-past six o'clock we were mounting the snow-covered path that leads from the hut to the glacier. It ought to command a splendid view over the great snow-basin which feeds the Ober-Sulzbach glacier and tumbles in the ice-fall, nicknamed Turkish Camp, to lower levels. Of all this we saw little; of the peaks around nothing. The grey cloud-pall that covered them to the bases of their pyramids cast a deathly pallor on the snow-fields, wherewith the soundlessness of the day was in harmony, for there was neither sough of wind nor song of water. The surface of the new snow between the hut and the ice was dotted and lined all over with the tracks of birds and animals. One marmot's track crossed and recrossed itself, like the spoor of a mad thing. The little beast, I suppose, was ravenously hungry. Running about would not help him, for every blade of the scanty grass lay beneath more than a foot of new snow.

Ahead, as we rose, was the broad snow pass leading to the névé that slopes down from the ridge between the two Venedigers. A few curious points of rock appeared over the saddle, looking for all the world like one of the tomb-mosques of the Cairo Khalifs. I snorted and puffed up-hill, pounding through the deep snow, for I had caught a cold in the stuffy hut. There was no variety in our work. The slope remained constant, the snow knee-deep

<sup>1</sup> Venedigerscharte. Left the Kürsinger hut at 6.20 A.M. Half an hour up path to glacier; two hours and three-quarters up the glacier to the pass; three-quarters of an hour down left side of glacier; twenty minutes along path to Prag hut; one hour and a quarter to Matreiertauernhaus; three hours to Windisch Matrei.

and powdery like flour. Clouds covered the peaks, but just let us, from time to time, discover the position of the Venedigerscharte, the saddle between the Great and Little Venedigers. We wound steadily towards it, without any halt, penetrating more and more deeply into the snowy recess between the two mountains. Northward under the cloud-roof, a gloomy blue landscape developed, cut off below by the greyish-white snow-field. The wind that was raging overhead did not reach us. Stillness and an indescribable solemnity reigned in the solitude. With a final pull we mounted a slope steeper than its predecessors and came out on the pass.

To our right close at hand was now the Gross Venediger. Half an hour's easy walking should have carried us up the broad snow ridge to the corniced top. We started towards it, but again, as on the Hoch Feiler, we were to be driven back by a freezing wind. Clouds and snow were whirled about us and the very air seemed to be a hard freezing substance. How near we may have come to the summit I know not, for we never saw it. We had no choice but to turn and run from the gale to sheltered regions, where the sun was good enough to shine upon us as we made our rapid way down the left side of the Schlatten snow-field. In all directions we could see the bases of snowy mountains far away even as the Gross Glockner itself, but nowhere any summits. All were cut off level by the clouds, as by a plane, at an altitude of some 10,000 feet.

Avoiding a number of large crevasses, treacherously masked by the deep new snow, we made our exit from the glacier on to its left bank. A snow-covered path led by easy gradients to the Prag hut, where the old woman in charge, who had seen us coming, was in act of cooking for us an excellent mutton-broth.

Little need be said about the remainder of our descent to the village of Windisch Matrei, a quick four hours' walk. It was stony and unpleasant travelling, the path being for long distances paved—a bad Tirolese habit.

The scenery too, except just at the opening of the Frossnitz Thal, is not remarkable till Mauterthaler is approached. There you come upon a theatrically striking point of view, whence the historic village and its eminent castle are suddenly displayed in the midst of a green basin of meadows and fields. An inviting path leads a few steps round a corner. You follow it and find the downward view shut off by a wooded knoll, and in its place a glimpse up the valley from the top of an overhanging cliff which curves round in front and forms its own astonishingly bold foreground. Advancing three yards further, you look not up but across the valley and a great waterfall from the opposing mountain leaps into the depths at your feet.

I can recall no other area, a few yards square, commanding, as this does, three such different and indeed contrasting views, each complete in itself and perfect of its kind, with a suitable foreground of its own, and visible only when the others are hidden. In the nature of things, such a situation must be rare and may be unique.

## CHAPTER XV

### GROSS GLOCKNER AND EASTWARD

*Aug. 21.*

I AWOKE to find rain once more falling fast and the sky covered with a uniform roof of heavy clouds ; but the rain presently stopped, the sun shone out, and the sky was blue. Over the Venediger, however, cloud and darkness remained. We started at nine o'clock to cross the famous Kals-Matreier Thörl, a grass-pass commanding views worth going to see. Three hours is the book-time for the ascent from Matrei, so we expected to be on the pass in an hour and a half, but the ascent was really a good two hours' walk. Through the dank forest the way led, commanding at first fine views over the valleys we were leaving. My cold emphasised the sensation of dampness and made the opening glades all the more delightful, when the forest divided and the sun burst through. Wet blades of grass shone like golden threads beneath their feathery tipped flowers. We emerged on to the open alp, where the view developed behind us, straight up the Prägratten valley, broad, fertile, and prosperous, and round to the Gross Venediger, which was clear to its summit but backed by storm-borne clouds.

Arrived on the pass I was disappointed to find that the Gross Glockner did not burst upon the vision in front, but lies away to the north. It was at the time buried in clouds. The snowfall of the previous night had, however, draped the mountains with white down to the level on which we stood, and thus gave dignity to the finely formed though small peaks, which occupied

the centre of the eastward view and stood up against a clear sky.

Grassy slopes led down eastward; they were steep, and soft with damp, so I forsook the path and made straight for the valley, where two villages, Grossdorf and Kals, were visible from afar. Reaching Grossdorf in forty minutes, I was minded to lunch, but there was no inn, so I walked down to Kals and ordered a meal. An hour passed and the Gurkhas did not appear. I sent a child in search of them, then a man. Another hour passed, and a third; the man did not return nor did the Gurkhas arrive. I concluded that they must have gone on towards the Stüdlhütte which I pointed out to them from the Thörl as our sleeping-place. My chief fear was that the man who had gone in pursuit would bring them back from the high hut to Kals. On the whole I concluded to go myself to the Stüdlhütte, leaving word at Kals that if the Gurkhas returned they were to be fed and sent on, under escort of a guide, to the Stüdlhütte.

Under the circumstances the walk was not an agreeable one.<sup>1</sup> I went away at a good pace and rose rapidly. Behind me was a fine but simple view of the valley descending from the Thörl. It has a great hollow at its head and spreads out below into a broad mud-avalanche fan, whose substance formerly filled the hollow. The sun struck broadly over this scene, filling the hollow with shade, and covering the fan with light. After an hour's sharp walk came a division in the way, and a path turned off towards the Berger Pass, which leads to Heiligenblut. My valley, the Ködnitzthal, bent round from east to north and the Gross Glockner presently came into sight

<sup>1</sup> Gross Glockner (3798 m.). From Kals two hours and a half up the Ködnitzthal to the Ködnitz glacier; twenty-five minutes to the Stüdlhütte; thence by a zigzag path up the Scheere ridge and across the Ködnitz névé to the Blauköpfe ridge and up it to the Adlersruhe hut in one hour and a half; thirty-five minutes up the south arête and over the Klein Glockner to the top of the Gross Glockner; seventeen minutes back to the hut; twenty-five minutes down south-east arête and glacier to unroping; fifteen minutes down path to right bank of Pasterze glacier; twenty-five minutes across the glacier; thirty-five minutes path to the Glocknerhaus; two hours to Heiligenblut.

above the Ködnitz glacier, as the lowlands disappeared behind the corner. It is a fine peak, with the toothed ridge of the Glocknerwand leading away from it and the Stüdl rock-arête descending hitherward—a peak that bears comparison with the higher snow pyramids of the central Alps. The water from the Ködnitz glacier is clear as a Scotch burn, which proves that falling stones are few on this side and that the glacier flows over a smooth bed with little friction. A beautiful alpine basin, dotted over with wooden huts, presently opened before me. In Switzerland it would have been vocal with clanging cow-bells, but here it was deserted and silent; for the Tirolese custom is to mow the middle alps, not to graze them. The wooden huts were only to hold the hay, till winter, when it is brought down icy shoots—an occasion of much festivity.

Nailed against one of the trees I noticed a crucifix which looked so unusually good from a distance that I went to inspect it. It appeared to be of cast metal, painted. It was cast from a good model. The horrible wooden things of local make will not be missed if in course of time their place is taken by manufactured articles as good as this one. A similar though less desirable change may be observed in every Tirolese churchyard, where the grave-crucifixes are all of Munich manufacture. The destruction of village industries is usually to be regretted, but the village sculptor of religious emblems has long ago forgotten any artistic traditions that his predecessors may have possessed.

I walked on towards the Glockner, and marked with satisfaction how the cloud-veil over his head waxed thinner, till at last the form of the double summit could be clearly perceived through it. A steep grass-slope, rising before me, presently hid the peak and increased my toil. I wound slowly up it and came to a hut, named from its peasant owner the Lucknerhütte, so well built, and so excellently furnished that I took it for a club cabane, till I penetrated into its last chamber and found

bowls of milk set on shelves to cream. The cold, which had been upon me for two days, made me slack, and I would thankfully have stopped where I was for the night; but this could not be. So I toiled forward up the steep slope, and, rounding a corner, came face to face with a huge bull. We eyed one another for a moment; I was not sorry to get above him and out of his way.

Yet higher up, patches of new snow lay upon the grass, and then the meadow ceased and I entered a place of stones, a hollow which trended round to the west and narrowed to a winding valley, leading up to the col whereon the Stüdl hut is placed. In this barren place I became thoroughly fagged out, but, concluding that the hut could not be far away, I urged myself onwards at a sharp pace. The valley, in its windings, shut out all distant views. It is solitary and forlorn as any Tibetan nala; and, save that the yellow sand was missing, resembled the last stretches below the Fotu or Nomika La. Sooner than I expected, the saddle appeared close above me and on it a woman's figure. I hurried up the last slope and found the hut a few yards away. There was a splendid view to the south-west over hills and valleys gilded by the evening sun, but I lingered not to watch it. Rest, food, and warmth were the requirements of the moment.

Nothing was known about the Gurkhas. Their disappearance was complete. An hour after my arrival a woman came in, whom I had passed on the way up. She was as short and broad at the shoulders as a Gurkha; at the hips she was wide as a door. Her feet looked huge in their great boots, and her hands matched them for size and power. So masculine a figure was absurd in petticoats, yet her face was pleasant, with a perfectly feminine expression, her manners were better than those of any peasant I saw in these parts. She was a friend of the woman and her daughter who keep the inn, and their conversation was carried on in voices of agreeable intonation. She was intelligent too, as all the remarks I heard

her make proved. When her friends left the room (kitchen and guest-room in one) she settled down to a volume of the *Fliegende Blätter*, which she read with evident understanding and amusement.

I was left to employ myself with the visitors' book, wherein the German names are written as badly as usual. The average badness of the writing in these books is not my observation—a foreigner may be unable easily to read writing with whose style he is not familiar—the fact has been pointed out to me by several German friends. I once showed an educated German a page of names, not one of which could he decipher off-hand. With the Germans, even more than with us, it seems to be the fashion to sign a name illegibly.

As the evening drew into night and the Gurkhas did not come, I lost hope of climbing the Gross Glockner next day. The weather as steadily seemed to be settling down well for the first time in some weeks.

*Aug. 22.*

It was not so fine a morning as I hoped, but there were compensations, for, on leaving my room and going to the hut door, I was met by the Gurkhas at the moment of their arrival. They looked tired, and no wonder, for their ways had been long. They descended to Grossdorf, as I expected, and there the folk misdirected them, so they hurried on up the Teischnitzthal to a high alp not two hours below the Stüdl hut. A man sent them back and told them to go up the Dorferthal, which they did, to its alp, where they were again sent back. Amar Sing felt that the Teischnitzthal was the right way, for I had pointed out the Stüdl hut to him as our goal. Back accordingly they again came up this valley to its alp, where the night overtook them and they slept in a hay hut. The guide, Johann Fieger, whom I sent after them, took them down to Kals and then brought them up. Thus, after a day of labour and a night of suspense, we came together again. It was on the whole perhaps as well



SUNRISE FROM THE ADLERSRUHE, ON THE GROSS GLOCKNER, LOOKING NORTH-EAST

A.D.M.C.



that the weather was doubtful, for rest was what the men needed under any circumstances.

There are occasions, however, when inaction becomes intolerable, and this was one. As the morning advanced people kept arriving from Kals and all needed to be fed. There was but one room to hold us, and that was small. In a corner of it was the cooking-stove. The air would soon have become foul enough from the mere presence of so many people, who of course unanimously preferred to keep the windows shut, but when, besides breathing, all smoked, and fumes of continuous cooking were added, it became impossible to stay inside the place. Without, it was too cold to stand and neither I nor the men cared to go to bed. So by one o'clock I easily induced them to start for the Erzherzog Johannshütte, planted high up on a shoulder of the Gross Glockner, called the Adlersruhe. We walked briskly up a zigzag track, that a cow might follow, to the top of the Scheere, whence the Louisengrat rock-arête springs boldly to the Glockner's top. Quitting this arête we crossed the easy snow-field of the Ködnitz glacier, the way being marked not only by porters' tracks, but by a row of wooden posts. And now the weather was kind to us. The clouds parted and the whole of the Glockner's rocky south-west face was displayed. It is beyond contradiction a noble mountain mass, finely built and well proportioned, so as to convey a sense of magnitude and bold upward thrust far in excess of its true attributes. We crossed the névé without putting on the rope and came to the rocks of the Blauköpfe ridge, which descends from the Adlersruhe and forms the eastern boundary of the Ködnitz Kees. Here nature provided a simple arête-scramble, but some German Alpine Club section has intervened, built a staircase, and furnished it with a wire rope for the hand. The staircase was buried under hard frozen snow and steps had to be cut in its covering. As we neared the top, clouds enveloped us again and a smart breeze smote us on the ridge, but these discomforts were of short

duration, for the hut was within ten yards of the top of the arête. We reached it in an hour and a half from the Stüdlhütte, and were followed at various intervals by the people who drove us thence. Fortunately, both in its accommodation and ventilation the upper hut is superior to the lower, so that our change was for the better. When all were assembled we included representatives of many nations—Germans, Austrians, Greeks, English, Indians. The walk made every one hungry, and cooking was soon in active progress. The milk-white fog attracted no one into the night.

In the hut are three sleeping-rooms, one for guides, the others for visitors. A long low shelf fills the greater part of each, and on it mattresses are ranged in close proximity to one another. How many men slept in my room I know not, but together they produced a loud chorus. I lay listening to them for hours. Occasional cries broke the monotony. One man suffered in his dreams and called aloud for help. Another orated vociferously from time to time. My neighbour mumbled into my ear. Ultimately I too slept and the remainder of the night was quickly gone.

*Aug. 23.*

The unexpected news that the morning was fine aroused all from slumber at an early hour. While coffee was brewing I stepped forth on to the terrace and was saluted by a glorious flare of dawn. Usually the mountaineer starts in the night and beholds all stages of the breaking day. He comes suddenly upon none. It is the many-coloured transition from night to morning that impresses him, not any special effect at a particular moment. To-day, however, an early stage of dawn smote upon my eyes like a new and sudden wonder. Its beauty was in its simplicity. Dim and dark below lay the Pasterze glacier; beyond came ranges of hills, an indistinct mass rich in texture and dark in tone; and then, above its distant fretted edge, flamed far around a

narrow band of lambent light, a smokeless crimson fire. The belt of colour grew broader, as it is wont to grow, and blood-red cloudlets appeared within it. Long pink streamers of soft light struck up from where the sun was to come, and then the colours faded and the sun itself was there. All this happened as we were on our way; but what remains with me as the effect of singular beauty that the morning brought is the line of fire round the jagged eastern horizon, dividing the pure area of the sky from the soft darkness and mystery of the mountains and valleys below.

By five o'clock the whole crowd of some thirty persons, guides and travellers combined, had left the hut and were wending their way up the easy snow-slope, which, steepening and narrowing, ends in the sharp snow-arête that culminates in the point called Klein Glockner. We started almost last, but Karbir was bent on arriving first at the top. He raced us up at such speed that, instead of taking the normal hour or more, he landed me breathless on the highest point in thirty-five minutes, which included a halt for roping. As we neared the top of the Klein Glockner the sun came above the horizon and painted the snow about us pink, whereby our shadows were turned a complementary green. At this moment the prism of the mountain's shadow stretched like a long tent to the western horizon. The atmosphere outside it was opaque with light and hid the distant hills, but, within the shadow, they were clearly seen, remote and cold. A hard frost held the new snow in icy bonds; it was powdery on the surface but like rock beneath. The trodden way of the previous evening formed, therefore, a useful staircase.

From the Klein to the Gross Glockner, a distance that can be talked across, stretches what may be called the theatrical portion of the mountain. A narrow ridge connects and a gap separates the peaks. From the gap descends a deep couloir on either hand to the glacier below. The gap is perhaps a dozen steps wide, but these

must be taken on a snow-arête, by nature narrow, though usually trodden flat like the top of a wall. The descent to and the ascent from the gap are by rather steep rocks, which, I believe, have been broken into convenient steps. Iron rods, ropes, and stanchions simplify, under ordinary circumstances, the passage of this not difficult place. The rocks, as we found them, were, however, buried under drifted snow that had been turned into a finely powdered and very slippery ice. There was no secure footing to be had on them at all, except for persons shod with climbing irons. Such waltzed across. We had two alternatives: either to clear away the ice with the axe, a laborious process, or to swarm up the ropes and give our feet a holiday. The iron cords were horribly cold and the process of climbing by them was as uncomfortable as can be conceived, but it was rapid. In a few minutes we stood by the elaborate wooden signal and metal cross that occupy the culminating point of Tirol. A freezing wind greeted us, but the glorious panorama, brilliantly clear all the way round, amply repaid our discomfort.

The Gross Glockner's view is panoramic in the strictest sense. Like Mont Blanc, this peak rises well above all its neighbours and commands in every direction a far horizon. No near intrusive mass disturbs the progress of the circumambient eye. It concerns itself not with individual peaks but great mountain groups and territories. The groups too are finely massed in their remote succession. The Dolomites, a field of richly tinted rock, spread abroad both wide and deep, beautiful to look upon, though less finely seen than from the Hoch Feiler. The Pustertal's long and deep depression revealed in the furthest distance Ortler and Bernina too. The northern foothills of the Alps hid the lakes that are in their bosom, but a level mist above Zell revealed the presence of its little sea.

When on the Galenstock I had occasion to observe that sunrise may not be the most favourable time for a large mountain view. There the Oberland was near in the west and the low sun smote it into a flat white wall.

But the mountains west of the Glockner are not near enough to suffer such injury; vistas of atmosphere give them depth. Under any light they would only be regarded as masses; their details are of no account. Eastward, of course, was the charm of many ridges, one behind another, seen through various grades of sun-illuminated air.

The moments passed on the summit in perfection of enjoyment, but the arrival of a crowd abbreviated its duration. We started down to make room for others, and they soon followed us, so that, when I was on the lower peak, the upper was decorated by a cable of descending men. I took a photograph or two of them and was induced to promise copies to the immortalised performers. 'Please forgive my asking,' said one, 'but it would be such a delight to my parents to have it. I assure you they would frame it and show it to every one. For I saw when you took it, and there I was in the very front, firm on my feet.'

A run of seventeen minutes brought us back to the hut, where a hot breakfast awaited us. This is mountaineering in comfort. We loitered about after it, unwilling to descend from so noble a standpoint, for the view from the Adlersruhe is not much inferior to that from the Glockner, and there is the Glockner itself to look at. The descent lies over an easy glacier towards the Pasterze whose level Boden we crossed. There was now water on the ice. The streams had all been clogged by recent snow and frozen into a kind of honeycomb. A good path on the other side led in an hour and three-quarters from the upper hut, to the Glocknerhaus, a German Alpine-Club inn of a superior sort.

I was as much disappointed with the view of the Gross Glockner on this side as I was surprised at its grandeur on the other. Here it only shows as a small white pyramid, planted on a wall, lacking interest of form both in outline and contour. Neither is the Pasterze remarkable as a glacier. It is large but not grand, flowing between dull slopes. It lacks dignity, and is not comparable to the Übelthalferner.

After lunching on chamois, which the Gurkhas pronounced superior to ibex, we continued our downward way. The path was gay with countless little blue butterflies, frailest and fairest of the children of the air. Coming to the edge of one of the steps, so frequent in Tirolese valleys, the broad meadows of Heiligenblut spread beneath our view, with the village perched on the slope above them and the graceful church in the midst.

Instead of descending from the Glocknerhaus to Heiligenblut, we might have circled round the hillsides to the Seebichelhaus direct. But I was eager to see the historic village and the art treasures in the church. They well repaid the trouble. The church itself is architecturally meritorious, a slender edifice of late Gothic character, whose interior has been damaged by the coat of whitewash that hides its ancient coloured decoration. The tower, too, is of graceful proportions—the gracefullest Alpine village spire known to me. Beneath the choir is a cavernous crypt or lower church, said to be of old foundation, but in all its visible features of the same date as the rest of the edifice. The great glory of the church, however, is its high-altar piece, a marvel of intricate and excellent wood-carving. The wings carry well-composed reliefs within and interesting paintings without, but the centre far surpasses them in excellence. The figure of the Virgin is admirably graceful, and the Saints on either side are figures that would be creditable to any good school and period of art. Gold and colours are harmoniously and richly employed and the foliation and tracery are at once of surprising intricacy and in perfect taste. Unfortunately, what seems to be a fine recumbent figure of Jesse<sup>1</sup> asleep in a niche below and some painted panels yet further down are masked by a hideous modern tabernacle of cheap and painted wood. Beside the altar, against the wall, is an elaborately carved stone *Sacramentshäuschen*, that reaches to the roof and is imitated from Adam Kraft's famous work of the same kind at Nurem

<sup>1</sup> The custodian called him Abraham !

berg. On quitting the church I noticed some good hammered iron knobs on the door. All these things are witnesses to the wealth of Heiligenblut in the fifteenth and early part of the sixteenth centuries, before the glaciers advanced and covered up the mines, the source of the village's prosperity. Now the glaciers are in a measure repaying their debt by the stream of tourists they attract. I sat and watched them at evening when the Gross Glockner was flying southward its flag of peace, which the blue smoke of a hillside fire mimicked below. As the colour faded from the sky the deep-toned church-bell flung a blessing to the recesses of the hills and welcomed the approach of pallid night.

*Aug. 24.<sup>1</sup>*

As the days draw in and the sun rises later, it becomes more difficult to start early from one's inn. In the Maritimes, where it must be admitted our watches went a little vaguely, we used to find ourselves on the track by two o'clock and even then did not require a lantern. It is seldom necessary to start for a Tirolese hill before four o'clock. It must, however, be allowed that to leave Heiligenblut, as we did, though only for the Sonnblick, at seven in the morning is doing things somewhat lazily. We followed, without undue haste, the path that circles round the side of the hill to enter the Fleissthal's elevated mouth, and in so doing enjoyed charming views over the fertile Heiligenblut valley, across which early lights and shadows were falling. Above some ruined mine-buildings the way became uninteresting, nor was it in any way relieved till we came upon the Seebichelhaus, and knew that our waxing hunger would soon be satisfied.

We halted for more than an hour and were excellently fed. A wild path led us past other ruins and the rock-banked Zirm See, then zigzag up a buttress covered with

<sup>1</sup> Sonnblick (3025 m.). Left Heiligenblut at 7 A.M. Two hours and a half to the Seebichelhaus; one hour to snow; fifty minutes to the top. Descent: half an hour down the glacier; half an hour to old water-wheel; fifty minutes up to the Riffelscharte; two hours down to Böckstein.

large débris. I was wondering where our mountain was hiding itself, when we turned a corner and beheld it at the top of a considerable snow-field. It is a mean-looking little peak, dwarfed by the house on its point. The presence of a meteorological observatory was evident from a distance, for we could see the wind-gauge twirling round. Less than an hour's walk over the snow brought us to the house. On the way we enjoyed a splendid northward glimpse over a snow-saddle, whose whiteness emphasised the soft azure that filled the atmosphere and through which the Dachstein and other peaks appeared as the faintest of impalpable shadows.

The view from the summit is, of course, fine, but utterly different from the Gross Glockner's outlook, though the two mountains are near together. The latter commands a panorama ; the former a series of views which only present the panoramic character in certain directions. Northward long lines of blue mountains carry the eye round, but the Ankogel group and the Schareck cut through them on the east. Southward is a fine blue area wherein the hills of Steiermark display their beauty of form through depths of bluest air. In the rest of the circle, only the Glockner was an object of attraction, but an ungainly slope cuts across its base and deprives it of its proper glory.

After lunching and loitering we brought our minds to the necessity for descent. The whole glacier, down to its foot, was deeply covered with fresh snow, in the softest and nastiest condition. We waded it at our best pace and with little care, for the hidden crevasses were broken into and revealed by the crowd of visitors who daily throng this over-praised point of view. When crevasses ceased, and there were no more holes to drain the water away, mere slush prevailed ; each footstep as we quitted it, filled to the brim—a most unpleasant state of affairs. However, it did not last long. Half an hour further we arrived at a huge water-wheel which used to crush the ore extracted from the neighbouring disused mine. The

whole place wears an abandoned look, with its decaying rope railway, its deserted miners' house, and other evidences of former life. Near the wheel we commenced ascending the opposite side of the valley by a good path to the grassy Riffelscharte, a col giving access to the head of the Gastein valley. At one point the path crossed a gully containing the remains of a spring avalanche, which was bored through all its length, after the usual fashion, by a tunnel down which water flows. It chanced that we could look straight up this tunnel. Amar Sing, with the experience of age, observed that it was a strange looking place, but, as he was hot and it was cold, he preferred not to go into it. Karbir, with the enthusiasm of youth, climbed all the way up and came out grinning at the top.

The Riffelscharte commands commonplace views on both sides. A path leads down from it eastward to the Siglitzthal. At one place the cliff must be negotiated by a rough staircase, cleverly constructed. The highest alp is furnished with a little pavilion for the drinking of milk—a sure sign that a large summer resort is in the neighbourhood. It tempted us to a short halt, for which we afterwards made amends by a rapid and continuous march down the narrow carriage road. The valley soon grows beautiful and three waterfalls add to its charms. One spread like a veil over a face of rock. Another is twisted into a kind of spiral by the hollow into which it plunges. The way seemed long and the mouth of the Anlaufthal slow in coming, but at length we emerged from a wood on to the pretty cluster of houses forming the village of Böckstein, where, as I intended, we settled down for the night.

*Aug. 25.<sup>1</sup>*

The hot morning was devoted to needful rest. The

<sup>1</sup> Ankogel (3263 m.). From Böckstein two hours to the upper Radeck alp in the Anlaufthal; one hour and twenty minutes to the Ebeneck; twenty-five minutes to the Hanover hut; one hour and a half up glacier and south arête to the top; one hour down to the hut; one hour to the Hohen Tauern Pass; one hour and a quarter to bridge in Anlaufthal; one hour to Böckstein; half an hour to Wildbad Gastein.

sun, blazing into the Anlaufthal, up which we had to walk, induced me to postpone our departure till the shadows began to lengthen. Thus it was nearly three o'clock before we were again upon the road for our last expedition. We crossed a hot space and entered a shady wood, where the path was soft and grassy. It led into a charming avenue beside which flowed the glacier torrent through another avenue of its own. All the sights were peacefully rural, and, but for the colour of the torrent, it would have been hard to imagine ourselves near snowy regions. A rude reminder of mountain anger, recently let loose, appeared in the form of a mud-avalanche which had swept across the road and buried in its mass a little cart, whose side and wheels emerged pathetically from the rocks and hardened earth that overwhelmed them.

The Gurkhas found a number of bright red fungi by the path. The like, they said, grow near their homes in Nepal, but are not good to eat. They were also delighted with a snake asleep on the path. It was a little thing, about eighteen inches long, and beautifully marked with dark brown chevrons on its light brown skin. They stirred it up with a stick, and lifted it over into the long grass, beneath which it glided away. After some distance the level valley floor gave place to a more diversified and crumpled region, and the splendid rock-wall on the south approached, and forced the river into a gorge. Here we ought to have turned off by a path mounting the southern precipice, but, misled by a sign-board intended as a help, we continued up the main stream, and in two hours, reached the Upper Radeck alp. It was inhabited by twenty-nine cows, a cowherd, and a grumpy old woman with a face sour enough to turn milk. From them we learnt the error of our ways, and that, to retrieve it, we must turn straight up the southern hillside and climb to the crest. Already evening lights were tinting the sky so that there was no time for delay. The ascent was laborious in the extreme and

lay up steep débris of large and loosely balanced rocks, but we climbed them with the energy of the Five Foolish Virgins, and, just as night was coming on, reached a col named the Ebeneck. The Hanover hut was visible from it not far away to the left; at our feet, a few yards down was the path. Once on it, our troubles were at an end. We found a guide in occupation of the hut as cook and servant. It is a good enough shelter, but smells like an old-fashioned cross-Channel boat. It is provisioned on Dr. Pott's system, which I was thus at last able to test.

*Der Pott'sche Proviant System* has been much praised in German Alpine periodicals of recent years, and the praise is well deserved. As a scientific expert and a climber, Dr. Pott knows what kind of food is at once suitable for and palatable to mountaineers. He has caused a number of meat-preparations to be made and enclosed in small tins. Some are eaten cold, others are to be warmed before eating. Under his direction large baskets, divided into convenient compartments, are filled with these tins and with soups, packets of biscuits, rations of tea, coffee, and cocoa in portions, each sufficing for one person, a supply of sugar, and other things agreeable to climbers. Wines of simple but good quality are also provided. For the victualling of a hut all that is needed is to order one or more of these baskets from the agent and to send it to its destination. The prices of the commodities contained are low. I made a trial of as many varieties of the food as time permitted and found all excellent. The little tea-bricks are especially good. Any mountaineering or exploring party going to remote regions would be well advised to furnish itself with some of Dr. Pott's supplies.

*Aug. 26th.*

The ascent of the Ankogel was to be our last expedition, for this peak is the last of the snowy alps. The Hochalmspitze does indeed jut out beyond it to the south-east and is slightly higher, but is a mere buttress point.

The Ankogel is really the end of the snowy Hohe Tauern range. The climb, as we knew, would be neither long nor difficult, and there was nothing to be gained by an early start. But sleeplessness made it easier for me to get up than to lie in bed, so we left shortly after four o'clock and followed the path to a little glacier. A scramble up the slippery ice, and an easy rock-arête above it, brought us in an hour and a half to the top of our peak, shortly after sunrise.

The day was absolutely fine, but I found the view disappointing, and especially so in the early morning light. The Hochalmspitze, which is the principal feature in it, is not big enough to be impressive. Westwards were only the Glockner and Venediger groups, flattened into insignificance by the low striking light. To the south we overlooked numerous ranges of rocky hills, but their outlines are tame and tend to graceless levelness. The Dolomites were too distant and, in colour, too like the sky for picturesqueness. Such interest as they gave to the scene was topographical. Only to the north and east was there beauty of a remarkable order—northward, where the lines of the hills were good and the sunlight falling across the face of the Dachstein broke its wall into lights and shadows of charming tint—and eastward, where the fact that our journey was ended was made apparent by the sinking of the hills, one behind another, till they vanished beneath the plain, wide-spreading like the sea, in the golden flood of glory flowing from the newly risen sun.

The view from the top of the Ankogel was the sixteenth panorama which the weather had permitted us to see, this season, with more or less completeness. It is admitted that panoramic views possess a charm of their own. In the countless published descriptions of mountain ascents, writers invariably refer to the view from the summit, though they often omit to mention magnificent prospects which must have passed before their eyes at intermediate stages of the way. It would appear, there-



VIEW FROM THE ANKOEL, LOOKING NORTH

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fore, that summit or panoramic views, if not more beautiful than others, are at any rate more striking. Such being the case, it is remarkable that no attempt has been made either to analyse the nature of panoramic beauty or to classify even the best-known mountains in respect of the relative excellence of the panoramas they command. In a general way, indeed, it is admitted that the views from the Dom, Monte Rosa, and perhaps the Weisshorn are above, and those from the Matterhorn and Rothhorn below, the average; but I have never heard any one explain wherein their merits and defects consist.

Some peaks may command fine views but indifferent panoramas, for a panorama is a view all round, and as such may be bad, when the view in a particular direction may be superb. The view of Mont Blanc with the Aiguille du Géant in front of it, as seen from Mont Mallet, is a case in point. It is a splendid composition both of line and mass, but, taken alone, it does not make Mont Mallet's panorama good, neither does it hinder it from being good. The excellence of the panorama must be determined by other tests.

A commonplace in the praise of peaks, regarded as points of view, is that they stand over against fine ranges, as do the Lepontines in relation to the Bernese Oberland. Here we approximate to a better test, for the view of a long range approaches the panoramic; yet it would be possible for a point to command a splendid view of the Oberland yet possess an indifferent panorama.

Many elements, as it seems to me, must combine to produce the perfection of a panorama, but the most essential is one to which I have referred in the course of this work, the uninterrupted travel of the circumambient eye. Whether the view be over a vast extent of country seen from above, or of a surrounding wall of loftier peaks, the outline or series of outlines that range all about must be such that the eye can follow them round and round with continuous movement, never being interrupted by an intrusive mass or an unwelcome form, never

jolted by an inharmonious union or crossing of lines, never disturbed by failure in the easy and delightful flow of vision onward from point to point. That panorama is the most perfect which the eye follows round with the greatest luxury of movement. The subtle factor, quality of line, thus becomes of supreme importance, whilst the line itself is drawn out to the largest possible extent. How seldom in a mere view are the important lines all good! When the view embraces the entire horizon the chances of perfection are greatly diminished.

One consequence follows immediately from this criterion: no portion of a panorama can make a good picture, for the subject of a picture must be a composition complete within its chosen limits. The eye must not desire to wander beyond a picture's frame; the lines must bring it back from the margin inwards. But the lines of a panorama must carry the eye continuously onwards, just as tones and masses must lead it from the foreground continuously outwards. If an isolated portion of a panorama makes a satisfactory composition for a photograph the panorama as a whole stands condemned. To be good it must resemble an endless ribbon, charming throughout. If it is to be painted at all, it can only be painted on a hollow surface and continued the whole way round the spectator, painted in fact as a panorama.<sup>1</sup>

When a peak, especially if it be of pyramidal form, rises in the middle distance and cuts the horizon line, it generally spoils the panoramic effect. A mountain mass, on the other hand, rising with sufficient volume and buttressing, so that its outlines spread and merge into the continuing forms, may be a noble and harmonious presence. There is no need for the point of view to surpass all its neighbours in altitude, but they must group themselves well together. None must obtrude its

<sup>1</sup> Of course the same criterion applies to panoramic pictures as to peak views. It is impossible, for instance, to make a good panorama of such a subject as Niagara Falls.

single personality with ill-mannered prominence before the rest. If a great range can be on one side and a plain on the other, a fair skyline of continuous grace must unite the two.

Seldom indeed does a panorama possess such virtue throughout its entire circumference. It is only common in the case of peaks that far surpass all their neighbours and look abroad in all directions to a remote and almost level horizon. This is the secret of the glory of Mont Blanc's view. The manners of that monarch's courtiers are perfect, as beheld from his throne; among themselves, when you descend to them, they are often bad enough. The panorama from the top of the Great Pyramid is likewise of unusual merit. The sky-line waves with an agreeable though slight undulation. The great area of visible desert produces an effect of space comparable to that obtained from the highest peaks. The Nile valley winding away binds foreground and distance together. And the contrast between the green ribbon of fertility that flanks the river and the golden expanse of clean desert and limestone-cliff that occupies the rest of the view is strangely effective under the blue sky. The panorama from the tower of Antwerp Cathedral again is an example with which no fault can be found. But in both these cases the nature of the view is simple. Mountain countries are full of complex forms, and mountain panoramas, when finely composed, attain a higher magnificence than can be attained by panoramic views over flat countries. But perfect mountain panoramas must be rare. Surely it is time they were sought out and recorded that we may know where to find them.

We remained an hour on the summit of the Ankogel and then ran down to the hut. Amar Sing, going carelessly, slipped and cut one of his fingers to the bone, but did not seem to mind. We halted for a hot breakfast, and watched a pair of mountain finches playing on the rocks. Before nine o'clock we were on the downward way, or

rather an up and downward one, for the path from the hut to the Hohen Tauern pass, which we fortunately missed the previous day, is worse laid out than can be conceived. It is rough, stony, roundabout, and exposed to the morning sun, which was painfully hot. We were scorched, jolted, and annoyed before the col was gained. We cast ourselves down there under a shady rock and ate snow. But a stony valley had still to be descended. It was visible below and became less inviting the longer we gazed at it. We were soon hammering down, pounding our feet to a jelly and dissipating our tempers. At last we entered the woody region. The path descended a steep wall of rock by rapid zigzags and spiral twists. When we came to the bridge, which we ought to have crossed the previous day and did not, we were thankful indeed. Here, as good luck would have it, we found a bed of wild raspberry bushes in full fruit. We gathered the ripe berries in handfuls and devoured them rapturously, then followed the avenue road-way to Böckstein, whence a well-rolled bath-chair path—the Kaiserin Elizabeth Promenade—leads in half an hour to Wildbad Gastein.

The Gurkhas had neither luggage nor letters awaiting them at Gastein to make them eager to arrive there, whereas the Böckstein wine was good and the maid-servants were all in love with them. They followed me through the hot sun unwillingly, I thought; at all events they lagged behind. At the edge of Gastein, at a point where the footpath and the carriage road divide, I halted to let them come up. When they were within ten yards of me I went down the path and came at once to my hotel. That was the last I saw of them for two days. By some ill chance they did not see me at the critical point, and turned down the road, which, though it traverses the margin of Gastein, is so wooded as to command little view of the town. They passed the place by and continued down the valley, sleeping that night at Hof Gastein. Next day they walked on to the railway at

Lend, where I ultimately found them looking disconsolate enough.

Even this was not our last adventure. We travelled home by way of Munich and the Rhine. At Aschaffenburg, whilst I was sleeping, the guard officiously turned them out of the train and sent them off to Mainz. I only discovered what had happened when they were not forthcoming at Frankfurt. Then telegraphing began once more. Fortunately a quick train went in the nick of time and brought me to Mainz before worse mischief arose. I found them standing on the platform, hungry and hopeless. The remainder of our journey was fortunately productive of no further incidents. Arrived in London we drove up to my house and found Bruce on the doorstep! I handed the Gurkhas over to him, and he, in due course, took them back with him to Abbottabad and on to the Waziristan Expedition.

## CHAPTER XVI

### TIROLESE SCRAMBLES IN 1875<sup>1</sup>

#### I. THE WILDER FREIGER

ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon of the 30th July 1875, Bower (now Professor F. O. Bower of Glasgow and) I left the Hotel Krone at Sterzing, intending to climb the Zuckerhütl in the Stubai Alps. Our way lay up the Ridnaun Thal to Mareith and Ridnaun. The day was fine and the view up the valley superb. The snow-mountains at its head stood out clear against the blue sky, and we saw the summit of the Zuckerhütl in the midst of them. Beyond Tuins we sat down by the roadside to sketch the peaks. The Botzer, Hochgewand, Sonklarspitze, Zuckerhütl, Oestlicher Pfaff, Becher, and Wilder Freiger were all visible together. One by one they disappeared as we advanced towards the heart of the mountains. Beyond Mareith we ascended rapidly, up a sort of step in the valley, to the level Ridnaun plateau, an old lake-basin.

On entering the inn we found that the host had received our letter and engaged as guide for us one Braunhofer, nicknamed *Der Widner*, who was expected shortly. We ordered dinner and went out to look at the Wilder Freiger, the only snow peak in sight. At dinner-time the Widner was brought to us by the Wirth.

<sup>1</sup> This account, extracted from my old journal, is printed here both because it is referred to in the preceding chapters, and because few descriptions of early ascents in the Stubai Alps have been published in the English language. The names have been corrected up to date.

The two were a contrast; the Wirth a tall, fat, red-faced, jolly-looking old fellow, the guide lanky and uncouth. His breeches were many sizes too big for him, so that he was lost in them. He had no coat on, and, when he told us he only washed once a year, we believed him; but he turned up next day after the annual bath, in a suit of new clothes. The two worthies agreed that it was useless attempting to ascend the Zuckerhütl from Ridnaun, so we sent them away and attacked the soup, bread, and butter, which formed the whole of our meal. The upstairs room, where it was served, was meagrely furnished with high benches and low square tables. On the walls were bad German prints and a chalk-drawing of the inn-keeper himself.

Our bed-room was large and low, with five beds in it and one pie-dish for wash-basin. All the water was in a glass bottle. In a corner were two large towels, each a couple of yards long by a foot broad. On a table under a glass-case lay a wax-work S. Sebastian, represented as a boy, with mustachios and gilt boots. A number of flesh-coloured arrows with gilt heads and gilt feathers were stuck into him. I slept from half-past ten till one o'clock, when an old woman entered, brandished a light in our eyes, lit our candle, and departed without a word spoken.

We hastily dressed, ate a rough breakfast, packed our provision sack, and were off by 1.30, the guide leading the way with a lantern. An hour later we passed the highest house, the altitude being about 4600 feet and the temperature 10° Cent. The stream was followed to a rough building, the receiving shed at the lower end of the tramway that brings down minerals from the mountains. We waited here while Braunhofer went off to fetch his *Bergstock*. It was picturesque to see him moving about with his lantern amongst the trees. The *stock* was a wonderful thing, long and thin, with an iron hook at one end and a spike at the other. The hook was useless for step-cutting. Braunhofer had never seen or

heard of an ice-axe. It should be observed that there are no proper guides in this valley at all. The men who act as guides are only miners and chamois-hunters, who show you the way but do not regard themselves as responsible for you. They cannot climb slopes of ice or hard snow but must avoid them by détours. They prefer rocks to snow and are terribly afraid of crevasses. They understand something of the use of the rope, but all their ropes that I saw were thin and rotten.

On leaving the mineral house we mounted through a wood, far above the foaming torrent. The footing was bad, owing to the rotten pine-needles on the loose sharp stones that sprinkle the way. We presently reached a good path, paved with large stones, and carried along the side of a precipice above the torrent. The water eddying and whirling about below and the rocks standing up around, seen in the dim candle-light, produced a striking effect. Grass-slopes came where the paved path stopped and a tiny stream bubbled up brightly from the ground to tumble almost at once into the glacier torrent. At this time, though the stars were still visible, a faint light of dawn shone in the north-east and showed us something of our surroundings. The narrow and stony valley formed a natural staircase leading up from the woods towards fine rocky mountains bare of grass but patched here and there, high up, with snow. The torrent was roaring by our side, and goat-bells tingled on the nearer slopes. At a height of about 6000 feet we extinguished the lantern and, turning a corner, entered a small flat-bottomed lake-basin, across which the stream meandered in several beds. The little plain is enclosed by precipitous mountains with bare sides which seem to support the blue sky like a roof. At one end was the gap by which we had entered and at the other, high up, was another gap, through which the torrent falls in a series of cascades.

We crossed a swamp by the north side of the flat and climbed a steep grass-slope near the cascades, going a

little out of our way to a knoll, enveloped in spray, for the sake of the view, which was indeed superb. Above a number of juniper bushes was the top of the grass-slope whence we saw the last of the old lake-basin, with the long Ridnaunthal stretching away below it, and a few Dolomites in the extreme distance, red with dawn. Plunging into a narrow gorge and hastening along an up-and-down track, we came at 4.30 to the Ober-Aglsalm hut, where fresh milk was forthcoming and the Dolomites in sight again. It was hard work to separate the Widner from the bread and cheese wherewith the hospitable alpmen regaled him.

The path descended to the bank of the torrent and the gorge further contracted. An astonishing view opened at a sudden corner. The black snout of the Ebener glacier appeared in the depths of a gloomy gorge, pouring forth with deafening roar the muddy stream from its dark ice-cave. Away back, above the shadowed end of the glacier, stood the fine sérac-towers and spires of the great ice-fall, white and dazzling in the sunshine and projected against the blue sky. The sight startled us, for we had no notion that the glacier was so near at hand. As we advanced, the Hochgewand took the place of the séracs and looked almost as fine. For half an hour we traversed tiresome rocks and then descended some forty feet and crossed the left lateral moraine to the ice, up which we turned towards the foot of the beautiful ice-fall. At a convenient rock we halted to breakfast and admire the view. An impressive hollow enclosed us. Rock-walls shut us in behind and on the right; the ice-wall rose splendidly ahead between rock-buttresses; the Hochgewand was on our left. Around spread the undulating and dark surface of the glacier. Braunhofer was for changing the plan and climbing the Hochgewand, but we would none of it; so he led up the crags on our right, to a broad shelf of ice-worn rock almost level with the top of the ice-fall. Along this we traversed, parallel to the glacier, to a point where the ice could be entered

above the séracs. As we surveyed the fine névé basin that now displayed itself, and saw from close at hand the mountains that surround it and with whose distant outlines we had for weeks been growing familiar, cloud streamers formed on some of them, or faded only to re-form in greater volume.

We put on the rope and descended to the snow, which was still firm, though the sun was shining upon it. Westward up the north side of the basin was the way, towards the ridge of the Oestlicher Pfaff, over which we must pass to reach the Zuckerhütl. We had to compass a wide détour to avoid a snow-slope, too steep for direct ascent without axes; then we made for the col between the Wilder Freiger and the Oestlicher Pfaff (where now, in 1894, the Müllerhütte stands), reaching it at eleven o'clock. Clouds gathering on all sides induced a change of plan. We retraced our steps to the rocks at the south foot of the Wilder Freiger and there lunched. We traversed the snow-slope on the south-east face of the mountain to the rock ridge descending from its lower or eastern summit. The rocks were loose and rotten but easy enough. Half an hour up them took us to the lower point, whence we were still able to catch a fine view over the glorious basin of the Übelthal glacier; and a twenty minutes' trudge upon snow landed us on the higher summit, where we spread out our macintoshes and sat down in the midst of fog. It was 12.15 P.M. My aneroid gave the height as 11,351 feet. The temperature was 1° Cent. We rested for half an hour but caught only occasional glimpses of distant portions of the view through rifts in the clouds.

Shortly before one o'clock the descent began. From the lower point we made straight down snow-slopes and started an involuntary glissade. Bearing round to the right we rejoined our old route near the ice-worn rock-ledge, reached the glacier by the gully we came up, and traversed the ice to its snout at the entrance to the gorge. At six o'clock we re-entered Ridnaun, ravenous

for food. The hostess gave us supper and a bunch of Edelweiss, and on we went in the gathering darkness to make our way to Sterzing. It would be hard to imagine a less pleasant walk. The road was rough and the stones loose upon it; there were pools of water or mud at frequent intervals, so that we stumbled and plunged about in the gloom. To make matters worse we lost our way and blundered into a greasy tract across fields; but we hurried forward as hard as we could and gained our inn a little before nine o'clock, after a twenty hours' excursion.

## II. THE BOTZER

On the morning of the 13th of August we awoke to find lightning flashing, thunder rumbling, and rain descending in torrents. By noon things looked better, so Pierson (now the Rev. W. B. Pierson) and I walked off to Ridnaun. We arrived there soaked through. Clouds were down on the house roofs and nothing was to be seen of the hills, so after tea we started back for Sterzing in a disgusted condition. In half an hour we changed our minds again and returned to Ridnaun to defy the weather, which almost immediately cleared up. Hiring a boy to carry our packs we started for the Aglsalm to find a chamois-hunter. This time our route was up the left bank of the stream, by fields and grass-slopes, joining our former way at the bubbling spring near the old lake basin. The sun set grandly upon the Dolomites, which looked like masts of sunken ships standing out of a sea of cloud. A gathering mist just caught us at the hut. Braunhofer, who was there, reported much new snow above.

The hut, which we entered at seven o'clock, was a miserable shelter and the darkness within was profound. For window there was a small hole in the wall through which a bleating goat stuck its head and watched us. We shut the door to keep out the fog and wind, and lit

a wood fire on the floor. The place measured about twelve feet by eight. The roof sloped up from four feet at one side to eight feet at the other. We formed in all a party of seven men. A narrow passage ran down the middle from the door. On the left, where the roof was highest were shelves for the milk-pans. On the right was the bed of hay. The fire-place (three flat stones set up on their edges) was at the far end, and by it the copper cauldron and other utensils for cheese-making. Pierson and I secured the berths nearest the door. He was too tall for the bed and had to lie with his head over the edge, on a pile of sacks built up in the passage. The wind whistling through cracks in the wall kept the chamber from becoming close. There were so many things hanging from the low roof that we kept bumping our heads till we learnt to crawl about instead of walking. After our supper the men began to cook. They cast into the frying-pan bacon, butter, flour, eggs, and milk and stirred all up together with the point of Braunhofer's *Bergstock*. The mess frizzled and bubbled for ten minutes or more. When it was ready the hungry peasants, after repeating some prayers, fell to with a will and demolished the savoury compound. At nine o'clock the fire was extinguished and all seven of us squeezed together into the nine feet wide bed-place. Pierson's neighbour fell a prey to romantic and exciting dreams, but I was against the wall and slept well.

Bad weather prevailed at five o'clock next morning. At half-past six the day was very cold and clouds filled the valleys, but the peaks seemed clear; so at seven, after a light breakfast, we determined to start. The route was the same as for the Wilder Freiger to the point where the glacier is entered above the séracs. The Botzer was opposite across the névé, the Hochgewand west of it, and a pass, now called the Hoch Stellen Scharte, to the east with the Königshof further east. To reach this col we had to cross the Übelthal glacier by a band of level névé between the great ice-fall and a second

broken area higher up. The traverse was rapidly made; we enjoyed immensely looking into the huge blue schrunds from close at hand. A snow-slope led to easy rocks by which the Hoch Stellen Scharte was gained, close to a curious pinnacle of rock. A view down the Passeierthal opened before us, but, as the clouds were gathering again, we did not pause to study it.

We had to descend a few yards before turning to the left to climb a snow-slope just below the crest of rock that forms the watershed. The hot sun enfeebled us. We had not gone far before Pierson showed signs of mountain-sickness and begged to be left behind. We piled heaps of snow for seats, spread our macintoshes on them and sat down. I insisted that he should eat a mouthful of food and then another. The effect was magical. In a few minutes he was well again and we pushed on towards the top. We struck the final, gently inclined but sharp, snow-arête of our peak near its north end and followed it southward with care, for the new snow was insecure. At 11.30 we stood on the rocks which form the summit. Clouds were hanging about in many directions, but the view was fine, and the immediate proximity of the Wilder Freiger made it interesting to me, for I could trace the line of our previous expedition. We sketched violently all the time we were on the top, three-quarters of an hour, and puzzled our heads to reconcile the topography of the bad map (Barth and Pfaundler's) with the peaks in sight, and its nomenclature with Braunhofer's.

The descent was uneventful. From the col we turned south and went down to the foot of a small glacier, with a huge moraine, named by Braunhofer, Hohe Schwarz Spitz Ferner. At the edge of the ice the guide was paid off. He started eastward up hill to cross a pass to the Schneeberg inn, where he was to join the rest of our Sterzing party and take them up the Botzer next day. Pierson and I made our way as fast as we could down the left bank of the Passeier valley, admiring the glacier covered

mountains on our left,<sup>1</sup> and occasionally halting to look back at the Botzer, which delighted us by its precipitous aspect. A bend in the valley presently hid it.

On and on we plodded with increasing weariness. About six o'clock we reached some chalets at the foot of the Timblerjoch, but hastened by them and on past Schönauf, Rabenstein, and Gand. A brief halt was made at Moos, in the mouth of the Pfelderthal, for a morsel of food. At last, footsore and weary, we came, at nine o'clock in the bright moonlight, to S. Leonard. Before breakfast next day we walked to Meran through twelve miles of valley, which passed from rugged barrenness to Italian fertility. In the evening we walked eighteen miles on to Botzen, and returned to Sterzing by early train next day.

### III. THE WILDE KREUZ SPITZE

On the 20th of August I was staying at Brennerbad, making a short cure. After lunch I resigned my room and walked over the Schlüsseljoch to meet Bower, by appointment, at Kematen in the Pfitscherthal. The inn was reached at 4.30 P.M. Inquiring for a bedroom, I was led along a dark passage, up a darker ladder-staircase, to a landing darkest of all. A door led to a hay-loft, opening on a balcony at one end and the hillside at the other. Part of the hay-loft, thinly screened off, formed the bed-room. It was freshly done up and clean. Six ugly prints of saints were on the walls; there was a bed in each corner and a table in the middle. It was delightful to lie on the grass outside the house in the evening sunshine and watch the peaks. When the sun began to set they glowed like fire. The valley was flooded with night, but the Hoch Feiler's glaciers looked like streams of molten lava pouring into it, whilst gossamer webs of radiant gold floated over the blue sky.

<sup>1</sup> The glaciers here were very small ones and, to judge by the diminution of the Übelthal glacier since 1875, have probably wholly disappeared. We sketched them.

When pink had followed gold and faded in its turn a pallid calm settled on the landscape, which even the animals seemed to share.

I met Bower on returning to the inn, where we supped and were soon wooing sleep; but the night was warm and the sky thickly overcast with unwelcome clouds. Hoping for the best, but expecting the worst, we left the inn at five o'clock and struck across to the entrance of the Grossberg valley. The sun rose beautifully amongst the soft clouds and glorified a wave of mist that poured over the Pitscherjoch and dissolved away as it descended to the warm depths. Queer puffs of hot smoke smote us from time to time on the valley-flat. We did not enter the Grossbergthal but went down to the mouth of the parallel Bergunthal, whose south end is closed by the double-headed Wilde Kreuz Spitze.

Crossing the Bergun stream and passing through a wood we commenced mounting the path up our chosen valley. To begin with, it was narrow and steep. The stream played prettily amongst the trees with many idle falls and twists. Above the wood came the open alp, but the huts were for the hour deserted. It was half-past six o'clock and the clouds were growing denser every moment. They were collecting on our peak and would soon blot it out, so we halted (at 6700 feet) to observe the landmarks. The twin summits rose from a pile of débris above a glacier. There was a col to the left (north-east) of them, for which we determined to make, and then climb the ridge to the top. No sooner was the plan made than mist enveloped the peaks and began pouring over the col. Starting on, we traversed grass-slopes, climbed screes, and plunging into the clouds came upon the col (8200 feet). A momentary clearing showed that on the far side of it was merely the head of the Grossberg valley, which we might therefore have mounted direct. The top of the pass is narrow. We amused ourselves by throwing stones down the slope we had come up and watching them vanish into the fog. As the

weather showed no signs of improving we passed over on to the face of the mountain, which forms the head of the Grossberg valley, and climbed it, keeping as near the arête as possible. Sizes and distances are deceptive in a mist. We thought we saw a large snow-slope some distance ahead; a few steps brought us to it and a few more carried us up. It was a mere patch. We now took to the ridge of rotten rocks, loose and fatiguing to mount. They kept starting away under the foot and booming down out of sight, but the sound of them came back from far below—the only noise that broke the utter silence. At 9200 feet we encountered the foot of the final rocks and again halted, hoping for a clearance that would enable us to investigate the best line of ascent. The silence became almost oppressive, but it was ominously broken by the roll of thunder.

Without word spoken both turned simultaneously to descend. We ran down the stony slope, slipping with the loose fragments and sometimes falling heavily. We tried to keep near the ridge but mistook a rib on the face for it and followed that till the aneroid showed that we were well below the col. We traversed to the left, but there was no col, nothing but interminable slopes of loose stones leading down and down. At last we came to the bottom of something and ran against a cliff. The fog grew denser. The range of vision was not more than ten yards in any direction; we had no idea where we were, and the thunder was approaching every moment, discharges succeeding one another with increasing rapidity. At last we noticed a trickle of water on the ground a few inches wide. We followed it gladly, for it must lead somewhere. In about a hundred yards it passed through a narrow cleft in the rock-wall that had barred our progress and launched itself over a precipice to a flat below. We crawled through the niche, scrambled down the rocks, and emerged from the clouds with extraordinary suddenness. Below the rocks came pastures. As we reached them, the storm broke with fury on our peak. We

hurried forward down the valley, the Grossbergthal, hoping to find a hut before the storm broke on us also. A chalet appeared near at hand just as the first thunder-clap pealed overhead and big drops of rain began to fall. Bower's dignity forbade him to run, but I bolted for shelter and arrived dry; he came in five minutes later, soaked to the skin.

We were kept prisoners for an hour, with a number of gruff and uncommunicative rustics, till the rain stopped. Our descent was rendered charming by the proximity of the abounding torrent, racing along in flood, and the gaiety of the wet trees and mossy banks. About one o'clock we were in the Pfitscherthal; Sterzing was reached at half-past three.

The next day was gloriously fine, but two days later I was again repulsed by a violent storm from the Habicht. On the 28th of August we did indeed climb the Hoch Feiler, but in an all-obliterating fog, after which rain fell for days and I quitted Tirol in disgust, to spend the remainder of my vacation in German picture-galleries.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A RUN THROUGH THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL ALPS

By W. A. B. COOLIDGE

IT was with considerable reluctance that I yielded to Mr. Conway's flattering request that I would contribute to the book which describes his scamper through the Alps in 1894 some suggestions for a similar journey to be spread over three or more seasons. Each man has his own tastes and fancies as to the character of the mountain districts which he is inclined to visit. Hence a general sketch can suit no single individual in every particular, though I would fain hope that one or another item in my list may prove attractive to different climbers. I have not of course tried to draw out a *minute* scheme for the *complete exploration* of all districts of the Western and Central Alps, but have simply endeavoured to indicate in outline a journey through a considerable portion of the Alpine chain, so as to include the peaks and passes which an experience of thirty summers in the Alps has shown me are best worthy of a traveller's attention. A climber who, favoured by weather, has worked through one of the alternatives given in the case of a district in the Alps will have a good general knowledge of it, which may perhaps serve as the foundation whereon to build up his and our minute knowledge of that region. For be it always borne in mind that there are still many parts of the Alps which need careful study in detail, so that a rapid scamper through a large tract of country may pos-

sibly direct the attention of a wide-awake traveller to some mountain group the thorough exploration of which will certainly afford him infinite pleasure as well as increase the sum total of our knowledge of the Alps.

I should premise that, as a rule, it would be perfectly easy to zigzag from one to the other of the alternatives given, which frequently run parallel to each other on opposite sides of the main Alpine chain, or of one of its valleys. It should be understood too that the routes suggested do not always take up one day, sometimes extending over two or three. No 'new' climbs have been included, while if the traveller is recommended to 'cross' a particular peak, he may assume with certainty that there is a low and easy pass near by over which the heavy knapsacks may be sent by a porter.<sup>1</sup>

## I. THE MARITIME ALPS

The best starting-point for this group is the comfortable inn at *San Dalmazzo di Tenda*, on the road running over the Col de Tenda (the east limit of the group), and so easily accessible by carriage from Nice, Ventimiglia, or Turin *viâ* Cuneo. The north boundary of the district is the road now open over the Col de l'Argentière, de la Maddalena, or de Larche, from Cuneo to Barcelonnette. We must therefore work northwards from San Dalmazzo to some place on the Argentière road.

The first point to make for from San Dalmazzo is the inn at the Sanctuary of the *Madonna delle Finestre*, above

<sup>1</sup> I should be very well disposed (in answer to private letters addressed to me at Magdalen College, Oxford) to reply to queries, to elaborate more detailed routes in special districts, and to point out the best maps, books, and articles relating to the district in question. I would only beg that intending inquirers should *previously* study their district on some map or another, and especially in a 'Climbers' Guide,' if it has been already described in one of the volumes issued under that general title by Mr. Conway and myself, as joint editors.

In the text of this chapter it will be noticed that I have passed lightly over the better known districts, preferring to give more space to the unfrequented districts, particularly if they have not yet been described in the 'Climbers' Guides.'

S. Martin Lantosque, but still within Italian territory. One way is to go up to the immediate neighbourhood of the Laghi delle Meraviglie (visiting these by a slight détour, in order perhaps to solve the mysterious rock inscriptions of unknown date said to exist there), and then to go over the Arpeto and Colomb passes to the Sanctuary, thus crossing the head of the Gordolasca valley. This is a laborious though easy route, but to a traveller already in walking trim the following itinerary is confidently recommended. Sleep at the head of the Valmasca in one of the numerous huts to be found there, then climb the Mont Clapier (whence the Mediterranean is visible), and *either* continue more or less along the ridge to the Cima dei Gelas, above the Sanctuary, *or* descend into the Gordolasca valley, and cross the Colomb pass as before.

The *Baths of Valdieri* should be the next point aimed at. They are easily reached in two days from the Sanctuary by crossing the Finestre and Fenestrelle passes to the huts by the Rovina lake, and thence crossing the Argentera, the monarch of the Maritimes, to the Valletta glen, which leads straight down to the Baths. Thence the Monte Matto should be ascended as a day's excursion. From the Baths the pass (variously called Bassa de Druos, or Col de Valasco) at the head of the Valasco leads direct (the ascent of the Cima Malinvern can be combined with it) to Isola, in the Tinée valley. *S. Etienne* at the head of the same glen is admirably situated for a climber, and may be gained by road up the valley, or by climbing the Mont Mounier, a glorious point of view, on the way. The Mont Tinibras is the indispensable ascent from *S. Etienne*, while one day's walk leads from that village by the highest of the peaks called Mont Enchastrayes to Larche on the Argentière road. The Tête de Sautron may be taken next day on the way to Fouillouse, whence the ascent of the very striking Brec de Chambeyron is strongly recommended: the return from Fouillouse can be made to *S. Paul*, the chief village

in the Ubaye valley, above Barcelonnette. A longer, but very interesting way from S. Etienne to *Barcelonnette* is to cross the Col de Jallorgues to the very highest shepherd's hut in the Var valley, then to traverse the Mont Pelat, above the strange Lac d'Allos, to Allos, whence there is a good carriage road to Barcelonnette.

## II. THE COTTIAN ALPS (E BIT)

The proper north limit of this group is the pass of the Mont Cenis, but the ardent mountaineer will probably consider that his boundary will be the Col de la Traversette, since north of that pass and until near the Mont Thabor the peaks are not very high, and bear little eternal snow, while the lofty mass of the Central Dauphiny Alps (the main portion of the W. Cottians) will prove an almost irresistible attraction.

From Barcelonnette the traveller should ascend the Ubaye valley past S. Paul (whence the Brec is a most fascinating day's climb) to *Maljasset*, at the head of that valley. This hamlet occupies one of the finest positions in the Alps, and is an ideal 'centre' (save as regards the inn) for many days' stay. The Font Sancte on one side of the valley, and the Pointe Haute de Mary on the other, are two of the best climbs, apart from those which may be taken on the way to *Casteldelfino*, at the foot of the Viso.<sup>1</sup> If one day only can be spared, the Rubren, or the Tête des Toillies, should be crossed, both commanding superb views of the Viso. A far finer route would take two and a half days thus: from Maljasset cross the Aiguille de Chambeyron (the highest summit between the Mediterranean and the Viso) to the head of the Val Maira, and then go (as Mr. Conway did) by Elva, the Pelvo d'Elva, and the Col della Bicocca to Casteldelfino.

<sup>1</sup> Any one desiring to omit the Viso and to go direct to Central Dauphiny should cross the Font Sancte or the Panestrel to the Escreins glen, and so reach Guillestre (see below).

From Casteldelfino the ascent of the Viso is a necessity. From the Club hut at the head of the Forciolline valley (where Mr. Conway slept) the ascent is very easy, while the view is magnificent, should the summit be reached early and there be no clouds. The descent should be made down the east face, and so the inn on the Piano del Re (close to the sources of the Po, and the Col de la Traversette, with its curious fifteenth century tunnel) attained. To reach *Abriès* hence, the indefatigable climber will of course traverse the Visolotto, while others may be attracted by the easy Col de la Traversette, close to which are several peaks, any of which can be climbed on the way. From *Abriès* a good road, passing through some very fine gorges, leads down the valley of the Queyras to *Guillestre*, a station on the railway between Gap and Briançon, and our starting-point for the Central Dauphiny Alps.

It is possible that for some special reason a traveller may desire to make his way direct from *Abriès* to Modane. He will find many interesting and easy peaks on the way, *e.g.* Bric Bouchet, Bric Froid, Grand Glayza, Roche-brune, Punta del Cournour, Rognosa di Sestrières, Mont Albergian, Chaberton, and Mont Thabor. These offer no difficulties, and command glorious views, while they afford a glimpse of the famous Waldensian valleys of Piedmont, but, though I know and love them all well, yet I must confess that they are most attractive to climbers who have already explored the great Dauphiny peaks. Otherwise the continual sight of those giants opposite would be apt to create murmuring and discontent.

### III. THE CENTRAL DAUPHINY ALPS (W. COTTIANS)

As stated above, *Guillestre* is the best point from which the détour to these regions (for they are far away from the main ridge of the Alpine chain) may be made. A short journey by rail, then a short drive, bring the

traveller to the picturesque but dirty village of *Ville Vallouise*. The centre of the district, *La Bérarde*, can hence be reached in a day by way of the Col de la Temple, with which should most certainly be combined the ascent of the Pic Coolidge. (I freely allow that I have a pardonable affection for the summit which bears my name, but I think that it is universally allowed to be one of the very finest points of view in the Pelvoux district, being situated amid most of the highest peaks of the group.) If two days can be spared, the traveller should sleep at the Provence Club hut, next day ascend the Pelvoux *from the west* (this is the most convenient route for our purpose), and traverse the mountain slopes in order to gain the Sélé glacier, so as to cross the pass of the same name to La Bérarde: this is a long day, so that an early start is essential. From *La Bérarde* itself an almost countless number of ascents can be made, while the inn is more like a Swiss mountain inn than any we have yet come across in the course of our journey, so that this is an additional attraction to the place. The traverse of the Ecrins, and the ascent of the Meije are the almost indispensable climbs to be made hence. The Rouies, the Grande Ruine, and the Pic Coolidge are the finest belvederes, while the rock scrambler should not fail to visit Les Bans, the Pic des Etages, the Pic Bourcet, or the Rouget.

Hitherto I have given alternatives only for a day or two's extra journey. But from La Bérarde to the neighbourhood of *Modane* it is possible to take two quite different routes, each of which has its own merits and drawbacks. The former is much the shorter.

(a.) From La Bérarde cross the Grande Ruine or Râteau (or even the Meije, if aerial climbing is a source of delight to the man in view) to La Grave. Thence ascend the S. Aiguille d'Arves and cross the Col Lombard to the Rieu-blanc huts. Next day it is easy to cross the Col des Aiguilles d'Arves (taking the Central Aiguille d'Arves from the pass) to Valloires, which is only two hours'

above S. Michel, on the Mont Cenis line, and not very far below Modane.

(b.) From La Bérarde cross the Col de la Lavey to the Club hut of that name, ascending the Pic des Etages or the Rouies on the way. Next day climb the Pic d'Olan from the Sellettes glacier (up and down by the same route), and traverse the Brèche d'Olan to Le Désert in the Val Jouvrey. A two days' journey over the pass of Les Berches, and up the striking peak of the Roche de la Muzelle, brings us to Vénosc, a village in the Vénéon valley, between La Bérarde and Bourg d'Oisans. The grassy Col de l'Alpe leads over to Le Fréney, whence a pretty walk leads us to Clavans d'en haut, or a shepherd's hut higher up. Next day it is quite possible in a long walk to ascend both the higher summits of the Grandes Rousses, taking the south peak from the south-east, and gaining the north-east foot of the north peak by the Cols du Grand Sablat and des Quirliès. (The direct ridge between the two peaks offers considerable difficulties in its northern portion, but is a shorter route than that by the two passes, taking about three and a half hours. It is of course easy to descend from the south peak to the Fare Club hut on the west, and next day to gain the north-east base of the north peak by way of the Col de la Cochette.) Another low pass, involving two descents and two ascents, the Col d'Ornon, finally brings the wearied traveller to the exquisitely situated hamlet of *S. Jean d'Arves*. (It is a wide-spreading commune, but the cluster of houses near the church includes the inn, and is specially known as La Tour.) It is but half a day's journey hence to the *Rieublanc* huts, already mentioned under (a.). They form the best starting-point for the ascent of any of the three Aiguilles d'Arves.

#### IV. THE GRAIAN ALPS

Strictly speaking, the Cottians extend as far as the Mont Cenis, but for practical reasons a small bit of this chain

may be included in the Graians, which stretch from the Mont Cenis to the Little S. Bernard. The Graians therefore cover a great deal of country, and in many respects—wide pastures, great glaciers, fertile valleys—remind one of Switzerland. Here the system of alternative routes can be very well developed, the starting-point being Modane, and the meeting-place either Courmayeur, or some village on the Little S. Bernard road. The first of the two routes takes in what are specially called the Tarentaise Alps, while the other mainly follows the watershed, and political frontier, with a slight détour to the mountains of Cogne.

(a.) Cross the Dent Parrachée from the Fournache to the Arpont huts, and next day the Dôme de Chasseforêt (in the centre of the great glacier-clad region of the Vanoise) to Pralognan. If a day's halt be made here, it might be devoted to the Pointe de la Glière (a very pretty rock needle) or to the Grand Bec. The Aiguilles de Polset and de Péclet take one and a half days, as it is best to sleep out for them, though the east snowy peak of the Polset (so conspicuous from Pralognan) might be done in a day, but the valley is long and would have to be traversed twice.

From Pralognan cross the mule pass of the Col de la Vanoise to the Entre Deux Eaux huts, climbing on the way the Grande Casse, the monarch of the W. Graians. Next day go by the Cols de la Leisse and de Fresse to Val d'Isère, taking the Grande Motte *en route*. *Val d'Isère* is at the head of the Isère valley, and has a very nice little mountain inn of which Mr. Conway has sung the praises. For a climber it is better situated than Tignes, though its position is not nearly as beautiful. There are many fine belvederes in the neighbourhood. The Sassièrè and the Tsanteleina are among the higher points of view, but in some respects the lower Pointe de la Galise, Grande Aiguille Rousse, and Pointe de la Sana are to be preferred. The Dôme de Val d'Isère is an inaccessible-looking little rock peak, which affords an amusing

and not difficult rock scramble, while the Rocher de Franchet—which frowns superbly over Tignes—is but the butt end of a long rock wall, and is easily gained from the Val d'Isère side. The Mont Pourri is one of the most graceful mountains in the Alps, and can be attained by a long, though easy climb up its south arête, but from whichever side it is taken a night must be spent *à la belle étoile*, or in cow huts not well situated for climbers. (Those of Marais, above Tignes, may however be excepted, and deserve an afternoon's stroll for their own sake, as they command a most lovely view of Mont Blanc himself close at hand.)

From Val d'Isère the climber should cross the Sassièrè or the Tsanteleina to the pretty hamlet of Notre Dame de Rhêmes, and this for two reasons. One is to undergo the experience of sleeping at the curé's house as the inn is very poor; the other is to marvel at the terrific precipices of the Bec d'Invergnan, immediately overhead. These can be turned however, and next day the ascent of that peak should be made by the north ridge (gained from the Torrent glacier), descending to Fornet in Val Grisanche. (As Mr. Conway's diary shows, this hamlet may be reached in one day direct from Val d'Isère over the Sassièrè, but the détour to Notre Dame de Rhêmes is strongly recommended to all who have sufficient time.) Hence cross the Col de S. Grat (keeping to my route, which lies east of Mr. Conway's), ascending the highest peak of the Ruitor from the pass. It is a famous point of view. Then go down the great Ruitor glacier to La Thuille on the Little S. Bernard road. You may cross the Mont Favre or the Crammont to *Courmayeur*, but it is pleasanter to drive down to Pré S. Didier, and then up to Courmayeur.

(b.) This route zigzags across the watershed of the Alps, which here forms the political frontier as well. But after the Mont Cenis, police difficulties cease almost entirely.

From Modane go to sleep at the Hortière huts on the

way to the Col de Pelouse, on the south side of the valley, and next day cross the very elegant summit called the Aiguille de Scolette (or Pierre Menue) to the Etiache huts at the head of the Rochemolles glen. Thence climb the grand wall-like peak of the Rognosa d'Etiache (or Etache), descending by the Colle della Rognosa to the hamlet of Le Planais, and proceeding if possible that night up to the Savine huts, on the French side of the Col de Clapier. These are the best starting-point for the ascent of the three rock teeth known as the Dents d'Ambin, with which may be combined a visit to the cairn-crowned summit of the Roche d'Ambin. As the Hospice on the Mont Cenis is now generally full of Italian soldiers it is well to spend a second night at the Savine huts. Next day cross the Little Mont Cenis, and then the Pas du Chapeau, climbing from it the Pointe de Ronce, to Bessans, near the head of the Arc valley. Hence the ascent of the Charbonel, the third peak in height of the W. Graians, is short and easy, while the panorama is very remarkable. For historical reasons some may care to climb the Rochemelon. This is best done by taking the pilgrims' route from Bessans by the Ribon glen, and the Rochemelon glacier. The ancient chapel on the summit is much visited by the natives from both sides on August 5th, the festival of Notre Dame des Neiges, when Mass is said there. It is best to return by the Lombarde glen, and to spend the night at Avérole, the highest hamlet in the Alps, save one in the Livigno district and some in the Avers valley (Grisons). A charming two days can now be spent by an energetic climber. Cross the Col d'Arnaz to Balme in the Val d'Ala, climbing the fine rock peak of the Bessanese on the way, and next day return to France over the Ciamarella, a peak which will always remain in my memory, as thence, in 1883, I enjoyed the finest Alpine view, specially over the Piedmontese plain, that it has ever been my good fortune to gain. This brings us to *Bonneval*, at the very head of the Arc valley. Here, in 1895, the Lyons Section of the French Alpine Club is

to open a small inn for travellers. It will be a pendant to that at Val d'Isère, which is only four or five hours off over the Col d'Iseran.

From Bonneval go over the E. Levanna to Ceresole, or cross the Col du Carro to the same place, ascending the W. Levanna on the way. (By a longer détour the central and highest peak of the Levanna could be taken.) From Ceresole go to the fine Club hut at the west foot of the Grand Paradis, *either* by the Col du Grand Etret (whence the Punta del Broglio is accessible, the last bit being a nearly sheer rock needle) *or* by the Col du Charforon, taking from it the Becca di Monciair, or the Charforon. From the Club hut cross the Grand Paradis to *Cogne*. Here is another fine climbing centre, although the inn is but poor. The Mont Herbetet, the Tour du Grand S. Pierre, and the Mont Emilius, are each accessible in a long day, so that it is better to sleep out for them. The Punta Nera, the Tersiva, and the Punta Lavina are shorter climbs, and are all famous points of view. Dégioz in the Val Savaranche is the next point to be aimed at. The most direct way leads over the summit of the Grivola. Another interesting route is to cross two passes on the north of the Grivola, the Col de Trajo, and the Col de Mesoncles; from the latter, the rock tower of the Grand Nomenon (conspicuous from the Aosta valley) can be easily gained. Easy passes lead from Dégioz over to the Notre Dame de Rhêmes, but the traveller should prefer to go in a longish day to Val d'Isère by the Cols de Nivolet and de la Galise, and so join (*a.*).

## V. THE CHAIN OF MONT BLANC

If it is desired to traverse this range from end to end, it is best from La Thuille (under IV. (*a.*)) to cross the Little S. Bernard to Bourg S. Maurice and then the Col du Bonhomme to Contamines. Hence the Col de Miage or

the Col dit Infranchissable would bring the climber over to the south Miage glacier, whereon he would join the route taken by those who have gone direct from La Thuille by Courmayeur. From Courmayeur it is almost necessary to traverse *Mont Blanc*. This is most conveniently done by sleeping at the Dôme Club hut, and then mounting (as Mr. Conway did) by the Col de Bionnassay and the Dôme du Goûter, to the summit. Go down to the Grands Mulets, and thence by the Col and Aiguille du Midi to the *Montenvers inn*. The traveller should not fail to make hence the ascent of the Pic du Tacul, or of the Mont Mallet, while he may, if so inclined, also mount some of the more difficult peaks in this neighbourhood, *e.g.*, Charmoz, Grépon, Blaitière, Dru, or Verte. A pretty walk leads from the Montenvers to the Lognan inn on the left bank of the great Argentière glacier. A day may well be spent in exploring this huge icefield, visiting perhaps the Col d'Argentière, and climbing thence up the Tour Noir. Then comes one of the finest snow walks in the Alps: from Lognan go by the Col du Chardonnet, and the Fenêtre de Saleinaz to the head of the *Orny glacier*.

We have thus at length reached Swiss territory, and now the two main alternative routes part, not to reunite till far away in the east of Switzerland.

If the traveller decide to take the *north route* (VI. below), he should from the Orny glacier cross the Col du Tour to the village of *Argentière*. Hence the Buet should be ascended from the Pierre à Bérard inn, and the descent made (like Mr. Conway's party) to the Barberine huts. The natural route now is to traverse the Tour Sallières to the Salanfe huts, and next day to take the Dent du Midi on your way to Champéry. The Val d'Illiez is a pretty Alpine glen, and by the road down it Monthey and Bex are easily reached, and so the true commencement of the north route.

If bound from Orny for the *south route* (VII. below), you can easily go down direct by the Col d'Orny to *Orsières*, but a far prettier way is to cross the Cols du Trient,

and des Ecandies to the charming lake of Champey, well worth a visit, and but an hour above Orsières.

#### VI. THE NORTH ROUTE THROUGH THE SWISS ALPS

From Bex go up to the Anzeindaz inn on the Col de Cheville track. Hence cross the Diablerets to the Zanfleuron inn on the Sanetsch pass, and next day the Wildhorn to the Iffigen inn, above An der Lenk. Another day leads across the Wildstrubel to the *Gemmi*. But it is quite worth while to go down from Iffigen to An der Lenk, and to cross the Hahnenmoos to Adelboden. Above this pretty hamlet there is now a little Alpine inn on the Engstligen Alp, whence it is an easy day across the Wildstrubel to the *Gemmi*.

From the *Gemmi* go over the Rinderhorn to the Balmhorn (if the latter alone be preferred, it is more convenient to go down to the Schwarenbach inn, rather than to start from the Hôtel Wildstrubel on the summit of the pass). A long day may be brought to a happy conclusion by descending from the pass between the Rinderhorn and the Balmhorn to the head of the Dala glen, and crossing the Gizzifurka to Ried in the Lötschen valley. But if this is found too much for one day, go down the Dala glen to Leukerbad, and next day traverse the Torrenthorn to Ried.

*Ried* (as Mr. Conway has rightly pointed out) is a most charming spot. The Hockenhorn is a pleasant and easy climb, but the Lauterbrunnen Breithorn is harder, while the Bietschhorn is the hardest of all. The Schienhorn or the Nesthorn is strongly recommended, and may be combined with a few days' détour to the Belalp, with its wonderful view of the great Zermatt peaks.

From Ried go by the Lötschenlücke to the *Concordia Club hut*. Here again is a capital climbing centre. The Aletschhorn and the Jungfrau are each a day's work, while the round by the Ewigschneefeld, the Gross Viescherhorn,

the Ochsenhorn, the Viescher glacier, and the Grünhorn-lücke, is one of the most superb that I know of. From Concordia go to the Oberaar Club hut (close to the pass of the same name), climbing the Finsteraarhorn *en route*, and next day take the Oberaarhorn on the way to the *Grimsel*.

In order not to leave out some of the most famous of the Bernese peaks a round of several days might be made from here. Cross the Strahlegg to the Schwarzegg Club hut, then ascend the Gross Schreckhorn, and go down to Grindelwald. Mount to the Gleckstein (or Weisshorn) Club hut, and climb one or more of the peaks of the Wetterhorn on the way to the Club hut to be built in 1895 at the very head of the Urbachthal. The return to the Grimsel may be made *either* over the Hühnerstock, *or* by one of several passes to the Handegg inn.

Having thus traversed the central bit of the Bernese Oberland from end to end the climber should go by the Nägelisgrätli and the Triftlimmi (ascending the Dammastock or Galenstock on the way) to the secluded Gadmen valley, at the head of which there is a capital little mountain inn at the *Stein Alp*.

Hence, or better from the village of Gadmen itself, a pleasant round may be made by the Sätteli Pass to the Engstlen Alp, whence climb the Wendenstock one day, and the next take the Titlis on the way to Engelberg. Sleep at the Spannort Club hut, and take the Gross Spannort on your way to the Meienthal, whence the Susten Pass leads back to Stein, or the Sustenjoch to the Voralp Club hut.

From Stein cross the Sustenhorn to the Voralp Club hut, and then go down the valley to the Göschenen Alp, and *Göschenen*, at the mouth of the S. Gotthard tunnel.

A short journey by rail down the Reuss valley brings us to Amsteg, whence the pretty Maderanerthal gives access to the inn near its head. None should fail to ascend hence the Grosse Windgälle, but for the Gross Scheerhorn it is best to sleep at the Hüfi Club hut.

Those who are fond of endless snow-fields may cross from the inn or hut to Thierfehd at the head of the Linththal by the easy but often laborious Planura Pass. A far more interesting way is however the following. From the inn cross the Oberalpstock to Disentis, and then, after a night at the Rusein Alp (not quite so black as Mr. Conway has painted it), cross, by one of several routes, the striking peak of the Tödi to Thierfehd. From Thierfehd Mr. Conway's route to Ragaz is the best—Ruchi, Hausstock, Piz Segnes, and the Calfeisenthal. A variation may be made by descending from Piz Segnes to Flims, and next day crossing the isolated summit of the Ringelspitze to the Calfeisenthal. (Rock climbers should be told that between Thierfehd and the Vorder Rhein valley there are some remarkable rock peaks, of which they may care to know. Cross the Vorder Selbsanft to Brigels, and devote a day to the strange Kavestrau group. It is easy thence to reach Flims by fine pastures or by road, while the historical Panixer Pass, with the Hausstock, would lead from Brigels direct to Elm.)

After leaving Ragaz we next go to the Rhätikon chain, but little known to English travellers. The first peak is the Scesaplana, which may be most conveniently reached by Mr. Conway's route from Seewis, unless the traveller prefers to go from Ragaz by rail to Bludenz in the Vorarlberg, and then up the Brandnerthal to the Lünensee inn. Next day climb the Drusenfluh from the Schweizerthor on the way to the mountain inn at Partnun, at the head of the S. Antönien valley. Hence the ascent of the Sulzfluh is scarcely more than a rest day to the climber in good training, while next day the Madrishorn offers an obvious and beautiful route to Klosters in the Prättigau. Some hours above this pretty village is the *Silvretta Club hut*, practically a small inn in summer. The indispensable ascents from this point are the Gross Litzner, and the Verstanklahorn, while the traverse of Piz Buin brings one to the Madlenerhaus inn, at the head of the Gross Vermunt (or Fermont) glen. It is said that

the best way from this inn to the Jamthal Club hut is over the Radspitze, but the round by Galthür and the Jamthal may take the place of a rest day after such an unbroken succession of ascents. The Fluchthorn must now be crossed to the Heidelberger Club hut in the Fimber valley, whence an easy pass leads over to Compatsch, in the shut-in Samnaun glen. The Muttler and Piz Mondin are the best known points of view around here, and either may be taken on the way to Finstermünz. A climber will probably prefer to take the Stammer-spitze on his way to Remüs in the Lower Engadine, not very far above Finstermünz and the Austrian frontier.

Many writers place the western limit of the Eastern Alps at a point far west of Finstermünz, but here Switzerland ends, so that practically it is the best spot at which to bring to an end our long traverse through the north range of the Swiss Alps.

## VII. THE SOUTH ROUTE THROUGH THE SWISS ALPS

From Orsières go up to Bourg S. Pierre, whence a very good day's climb is the Mont Vélán, the view from which is far finer than would naturally be expected.<sup>1</sup>

Then the Grand Combin can be traversed (up by its west ridge, down by its east ridge) by way of the Col des Maisons Blanches to the Panossière Club hut, whence an easy day over the Grand Tavé brings you to the Mauvoisin inn. An energetic climber may take the Mont Pleureur on his way to the admirably situated *Chanrion Club hut*. Among the many ascents to be made hence the Mont Gelé, the Bec d'Epicoun, the Pointe d'Otemma, and the Ruinette, are specially recommended. The Mont Avril may serve for a stroll on a rest day.

<sup>1</sup> A traveller wishing to omit the Mont Blanc chain from his plan should from Cogné (iv. b. above) go (preferably over the Mont Emilius, or the Punta Crevasse) to the Aosta valley. Hence by Ollomont he can gain the By huts, and then cross the Mont Vélán to Bourg S. Pierre.

From Chanrion cross to Arolla, *either* by the Col de Seilon, with the ascent of the Mont Blanc de Seilon, *or* by going along the ridge from the Ruinette to the Mont Blanc de Seilon, and so down to the col; in either case the Pas de Chèvres must be traversed before *Arolla* is gained. The Mont Collon, the Dents des Bouquetins, and the Aiguilles Rouges d'Arolla are among the best climbs in this neighbourhood, as the Pigno d'Arolla is worth visiting for its view alone. Cross the Aiguille de la Za on your way to *Ferpècle*, which is the proper starting-point for the Dent Blanche, that most variable (so far as condition goes) of all the great Alpine peaks. Then go by the Col du Grand Cornier, taking the Grand Cornier on the way, to the Constantia Club hut, above the Zinal glacier, and thence over the Rothhorn, or the Gabelhorn, to *Zermatt*.

It is really unnecessary to dwell much on Zermatt, once a favourite climbing 'centre,' but now abandoned to the noisy tourist. Many of those who read these lines will have already done the Matterhorn, Weisshorn, Dom, and Monte Rosa. So, unless it is wished to zigzag in and out by the Schwarzthor, Lysjoch, Weisssthor, across the heads of the valleys round Monte Rosa, we may hurry away from Zermatt to the *Saas valley*, either by the Adler Pass, and the Strahlhorn, or by the Mischabeljoch and Alphubel, not forbidding active walkers to traverse the Rimpfischhorn, or the Allalinhorn, if they so desire.

From the Saas valley the Nadelhorn, and the Balfrin, on one side, the Weissmies, Laquinhorn, and Rossbodenhorn, on the other, are the favourite ascents. For our purposes the traverse of the Portjengrat, or Pizzo d'Andolla, to the Antrona glen, is to be preferred. Domo d'Ossola, and then the village of Simplon, are easily reached by beaten tracks and a high road. Now we quit 'centres' for good and have to make our way eastwards by many fine peaks and valleys scarcely known, even by name, to the madding and maddening crowd of tourists. From Simplon cross Monte Leone *viâ* the Hohmatten and Loccia Carnera Passes (or by the harder

direct routes from the Kaltwasser glacier, and down the east face) to the delightful basin pasture of the Veglia Alp (sometimes wrongly called Diveglia). Hence you can best go to *Binn* over the Helsenhorn, or the Hüllehorn.

*Binn* is still an unspoiled place, and from it a number of ascents may be made, even when the great peaks are deep in snow. I need mention only the Cherbadung, the Ofenhorn, and the curious twin pinnacles of the Klein Schienhorn. To gain *Tosa Falls* by far the finest route is to cross the Blindenhorn, the panorama from which, especially towards the Bernese Oberland, is wonderful on a fine day. From *Tosa Falls* the Basodino is often climbed, but in my opinion it scarcely deserves to be visited, at least in preference to the Blindenhorn. The highest of the Neufelgiuhörner offers an amusing scramble, while the Rothenthalhorn, and the Grieshorn, are well worth a visit. Indeed one or the other should be taken on the way to the Hospice of All 'Acqua, at the head of the Bedretto glen, three hours above Airolo on the S. Gotthard line. Hence you can climb the Pizzo Rotondo, the Pizzo di Pesciora, or the Wyttlenwasserstock, on the way to Realp, or even in a very long day's march traverse over many hills and dales to the S. Gotthard Hospice itself. But Realp, or Andermatt, is attained more comfortably, and the S. Gotthard can be examined on the way thence over the Pizzo Centrale to *Airolo*.

Above Airolo is the delightful 'Sommerfrisch' of Piora, where the good inn will serve as night-quarters, before crossing the Piz Lukmanier, or (preferably) the quaint little Dolomite peak called Pizzo Columbe, to the Hospice of Santa Maria on the summit of the Lukmanier Pass. Platta, further down the Lukmanier Pass, on the Disentis side, is most easily gained by the high road, but energetic mountaineers can easily take Piz Ganneretsch, or the Scopi, on the way. From Platta go over the undeservedly neglected Piz Medel to picturesque Olivone, at the east foot of the Lukmanier Pass. Hence make the steep

ascent into the Bresciana glen, and cross the Rheinwaldhorn to the Zapport Club hut, above the Sources of the Rhine. It is but two or three hours hence down to Hinterrhein, the first village in the main Rhine valley. But a more striking though far more circuitous route to Hinterrhein, or Splügen, is the following. From the Zapport Club hut cross the Güferhorn to Zervreila, a quaint summer hamlet at the foot of the imposing Zervreilerhorn. Next day cross Piz Terri, or Piz Scharboden, to Vrin, on its splendid shelf of pastures, with yet another branch of the Rhine roaring below it. Vals Platz may be gained by going down to the meeting of the Vrin glen with that of Vals, carriage road all the way. But the climbers' route lies over the Piz Aul, though the glens leading up to it are terribly stony and steep. From Vals, Hinterrhein may be gained by the grand panoramic point of the Fanellahorn, or Splügen village by the Bärenhorn, much lower and easier, yet also a very fine point of view. You can also traverse Piz Tomül to the secluded village of Safien Platz, and thence reach Splügen by the Weisshorn, the most westerly outlier of the Dolomite group north of Splügen. (It is worth while devoting a day to its examination, climbing its highest point, the Alperschellhorn, from the north, then making the tour of the second summit, the shattered Pizzas d'Annarosa, and returning by Sufers.) The Tambohorn is the favourite belvedere near Splügen, but its ascent is long and tedious, so that it is best to spend a night at the inn (Berghaus) on the Swiss side of the Splügen Pass. If this be done, the next day is but a short one, the traverse of the Surettahorn to the Baths of Madesimo. Hence the Piz Timun, or d'Emet, should be crossed to *Cresta*, one of the highest hamlets in the Avers valley (with a charming little inn): but though the ascent is short, the descent to Cresta involves several ups and downs. Cresta is delightfully situated at the foot of the limestone wall of the Weissberg, in the midst of wide-spreading meadows, which recall the description of the

Avers valley, given in the sixteenth century by Campell, the historian of Raetia, as 'foeni ferax.' Some distance up the glen is the hamlet of Juf (2042 mètres), believed to be the second highest in the entire chain of the Alps, the highest being Trepalle, (2069 mètres), in the Livigno district. Unluckily Cresta is separated by long valleys and side ridges from the Pizzo Gallegione and the Pizzo della Duana, two most splendid belvederes: for the former at least it is best to sleep out in some huts, in order to gain a view before clouds have come up, but if the descent be made either to Chiavenna, or into the Val Bregaglia, the length of the expedition is much shortened. On the other hand the traverse of either the Weissberg, or of Piz Platta (view very extensive) from Cresta to *Molins* on the Julier road is very short and easy. The slaty crags of the Piz Forbisch on the west of *Molins* may attract some climbers. But the way across the Piz della Calderas, the highest summit of the Err range, on the east of *Molins*, cannot be too strongly recommended. By merely following the ridge towards the north-east the Albula road may be gained, and so *Bergün*. If the Calderas be taken from *Molins*, up and down, then from Savognino, a little lower down the valley, you can climb Piz Michel, on the way to the Äla Club hut, and next day ascend the Piz d'Äla, or the Tinzenhorn (an active party could probably manage to do *both*) on the way down to *Bergün*. If *Bergün* be reached *viâ* the Calderas, then some days should certainly be spent in exploring these three grand Dolomite crags.

From *Bergün* take the Piz Kesch on the way to the Dürrenboden inn (there is a new Club hut at the north foot of the peak), and next day cross Piz Vadret to the Lower Engadine. The ascent of the Piz Linard (loftiest of all the Silvretta peaks) from Lavin is long, but the fine view from the summit is reported to repay all fatigues. Then the Vermunt Pass, combined with the ascent of Piz Buin, takes us to the Madlenerhaus, where we rejoin, after many wanderings, the north route through the

Swiss Alps, with which we parted company on the Orny glacier, at the other extremity of Switzerland.

Some of my readers may here cry out that a largish tract of the Alps has been passed over in this rapid run from the Col de Tenda to the Austrian frontier—the Disgrazia and Bernina groups. The reproach is quite true, but I venture to offer two excuses for this omission, one or both of which may shelter me against a greedy reader, who though having received so much still longs for more. On the one hand, it is well to leave *one* district of the Alps undescribed, in order that climbers who have derived some instruction from the preceding pages may have a bone to gnaw at, that is, that they may have one region left in the exploration of which they may sharpen their wits, which might be dulled if they were helped too much. On the other, these districts are, at least in great part, tolerably well known, and so information relating to them is easy to procure. But the real and true reason of their omission is (if I must confess it to those who have had patience with me during our long journey) simply that the said regions are practically unknown *to me*. Sad is it that it should be so, but summers are short, and the Alps are very big. And while ashamed of this ignorance of mine, I yet glory in it, for there are thus still some parts of the Western and Central Alps left for me to explore. But soon perhaps even these may share the fate which has overtaken so many of their rivals! *Qui vivra verra.*

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